Action Stories of Every Variety

ARGOSY

ON SALE EVERY WEDNESDAY

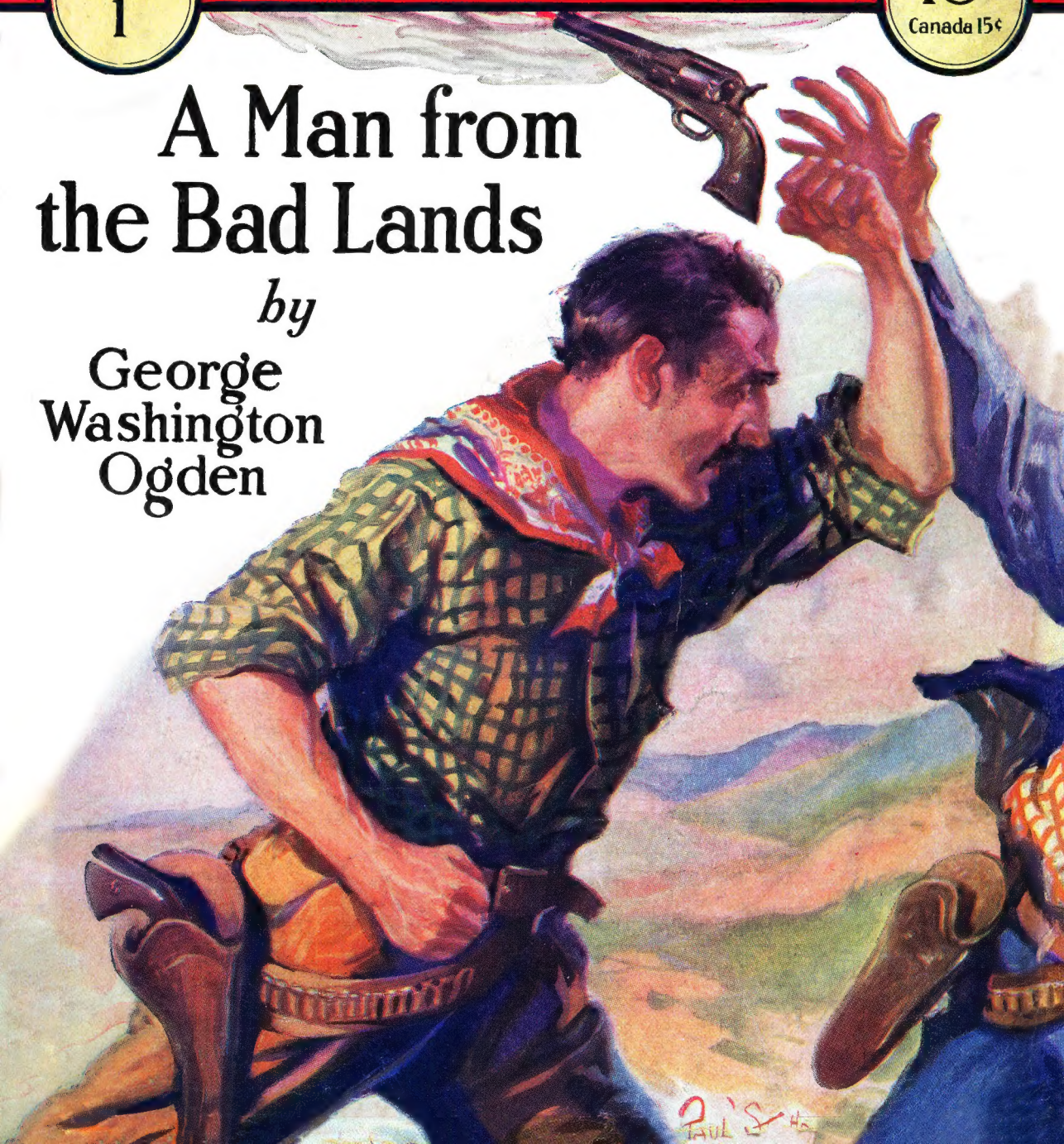
FEB. 1

10¢ Canada 15¢

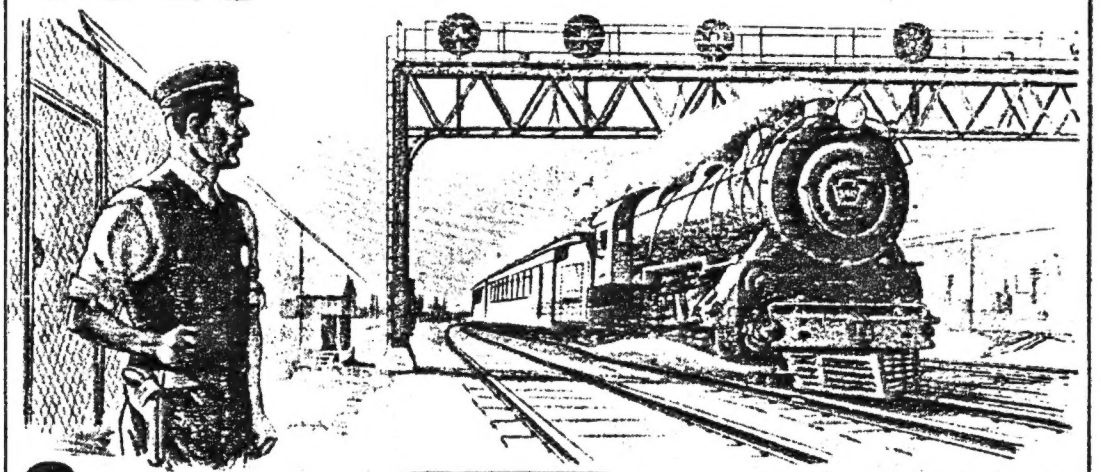
A Man from the Bad Lands

by

George Washington Ogden



COLT . . The Dependence of Great National Institutions



The Pennsylvania Railroad includes COLTS among the modern safety devices used throughout its system

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YOU cannot afford to be less particular in the choice of your fire arms than those public institutions, the very essence of whose service is SAFETY.

For 94 years Colt's has continually devised new tests of materials, workmanship and performance, until, to produce the Arm illustrated —the Colt Official Police, .38 Cal. Revolver— entails 564 machine and 124 hand operations and 322 visual and gauge inspections—1010 separate steps in all. These tests begin before the steels are forged into shape and end only after the finished Colt has been targeted by an expert marksman.

It is this unbelievable accuracy of manufacture which distinguishes Colt Revolvers and Automatic Pistols as the safest and most dependable Fire Arms for national, industrial and home protection.

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The New Colt's Catalog is an historical, instructive, descriptive Fire Arms Manual, profusely illustrated. Write for Catalog No. 28.

Let Colt's Service Department aid you in selecting the Arm best suited to your needs; in solving your shooting problems and in organizing a local Revolver Club.

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SMALL ARMS DIVISION
HARTFORD, CONN., U. S. A.
Phil. B. Bekeart Co., Pacific Coast Representative, 717 Market St., San Francisco, Calif.

A COLT PRODUCT

. . . The ARM OF LAW and ORDER

Missing Ad

ARGOSY

ON SALE EVERY WEDNESDAY

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This magazine is on sale every Wednesday throughout the United States and Canada

THE FRANK A. MUNSEY COMPANY, 280 BROADWAY, NEW YORK, N. Y., and
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Who Else Wants a Good DRAFTING JOB?

Here's good news for the man who wants a $50 or $75 a week job—who knows it takes training to land it—and who has been holding back for fear he didn't have enough education to make good.

I want to tell you about DRAFTING, and show you that it offers you everything in pay and opportunity that you could hope for. I want to show you that a fine Drafting job is now easily within your reach. And I want to set before you an amazing plan which we have worked out with the co-operation of some of the biggest employers and engineers in America, to prepare you at home, in spare time, get you the job and raise your pay—absolutely without risk of a penny on your part.

American School
Now—Jobs for students too!
1. WE GUARANTEE to prepare you for a good position in DRAFTING and DESIGN by giving you thorough, complete, up-to-date, and simplified home-study training.
2. WE ALSO GUARANTEE that, when you have completed at least one-half of this training, our Employment Service will help you secure a good position, without extra charge.
3. WE FURTHER GUARANTEE to refund the entire amount you have paid for this training if, within 60 days after submitting your final examination, you inform us that, in your opinion, our Training and Employment Service has not been satisfactory.
Pres.

Starts at $40 a Week

"Thanks for helping me get a Drafting position with Slyker Co. starting at $40 a week."
OSKAR R. LUDWIG

Mr. Oskar Ludwig has been in our employ as Draftsman for about three months and to date we have found his work satisfactory.
SLYKER, INC.
Gary, Ind.

Now Junior Draftsman

"I have obtained a position as a junior draftsman with the Muncie Oil Engine Co. I appreciate your aid in obtaining this position very much."
M. N. BAREHAM,
Muncie, Ind.

Wonderful Opportunities for you in DRAFTING

During the past few months we have placed hundreds of men, not a bit smarter than you, with no more schooling or experience, in fine Drafting positions with Architects, Contractors and in big manufacturing plants. Most of these men were formerly clerks, mechanics, building and trade workers, some even beginners and laborers.

Over 75,000 good Drafting jobs have been advertised in the past year. Draftsmen are urgently needed in all building, construction, manufacturing, mechanical and engineering lines.

Get Our No-Risk Job and Raise Plan

I wish I had the room to tell you all about DRAFTING—how it has become the most important branch of every kind of manufacturing and building construction work—how fascinating the work is—the fine bunch of fellows you'll work with—the big salaries paid—the wonderful chances for advancement. All this inside dope takes a 36-page book to describe and we'll be glad to send you a copy free when you mail the coupon for our no-risk job and raise plan.

THE AMERICAN SCHOOL

Dept. D-22, Drexel Ave. and 58th St., Chicago, Ill.

36 Page Drafting Book —FREE

Tells how easy Drafting is to learn—how interesting the work is—what remarkable opportunities are open for Draftsmen right now. Mail coupon for a copy—without cost or obligation.

AMERICAN SCHOOL, Dept. D-22, Drexel Ave. & 58th St., Chicago, Ill.

Please send me, without cost or obligation, 36 page Drafting Book, and tell me about your training and employment service in line marked X below.

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- ☐ Architecture
- ☐ Building
- ☐ Structural Steel
- ☐ Civil Engineering
- ☐ Auto Engineering
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- ☐ Accounting
- ☐ Mechanical Engineering
- ☐ Shop Superintendent
- ☐ Foremanship
- ☐ High School in 2 years

Name_____

St. No._____

City_____ State_____

Age_____ Occupation_____

Classified Advertising

The Purpose of this Department is to put the reader in touch immediately with the newest needfuls for the home, office, farm, or person; to offer, or seek, an unusual business opportunity, or to suggest a service that may be performed satisfactorily through correspondence. It will pay a housewife or business man equally well to read these advertisements carefully.

Classified Advertising Rate In The Munsey Combination Comprising:

All-Story (Combined with Munsey) - - - - - - - -
Argosy - - - - - - - -
Detective Fiction Weekly - -
Minimum space four lines.

Combination line rate **$3.00** less 2 per cent cash discount.

March 1st Classified Forms Close Feb. 1st.

AGENTS & SALESMEN WANTED

AGENTS: $15 TO $25 DAILY EASY, INTRODUCING NEW, PATENTED, AUTOMATIC SAFETY VENTILATING WINDOW LOCK. FOR HOUSES, STORES, BANKS, GARAGES, OFFICES. 3 TO 12 NEEDED EVERY HOUSE. RECOMMENDED BY POLICE. INSURANCE PEOPLE EVERYWHERE. NO COMPETITION. NOTHING LIKE IT ON EARTH. 3 MINUTE DEMONSTRATION. BE FIRST IN YOUR LOCALITY. SAMPLE EASILY CARRIED IN POCKET. ELMWOOD MFG. CO., 1082 Elmwood Place, Cincinnati, O.

NEW, DIFFERENT! MILADY'S NOVELTY CLOTHES BRUSH. RAINBOW COLORS CREATE INSTANT SALES. WADLEIGH MADE $24 FIRST DAY. **FREE SAMPLE.** JENSEN CO., 304 SO. DEARBORN, CHICAGO.

WE START YOU WITHOUT A DOLLAR, 150% PROFIT. SOAPS, EXTRACTS, PERFUMES, TOILET GOODS. EXPERIENCE UNNECESSARY. FREE SAMPLE CASE. AUTO FURNISHED. CARNATION CO., 140, ST. LOUIS, MO.

BIG MONEY AND FAST SALES. EVERY OWNER BUYS GOLD INITIALS for his auto. You charge $1.50, make $1.35. Ten orders daily easy. Write for particulars and free samples. AMERICAN MONOGRAM CO., Dept. 54, East Orange, N. J.

UNUSUAL OPPORTUNITY — $100 WEEKLY SELLING BETTER QUALITY, ALL-WOOL, union-made-to-measure suits and topcoats at $23.50 and $31.50. Build big repeat business. Liberal bonus for producers. Large swatch samples **FREE.** W. Z. GIBSON, INC., 500 Throop, Dept. P-409, Chicago.

MAKE YOUR OWN PRODUCTS. EMPLOY AGENTS YOURSELF. TOILET ARTICLES, SOAP, EXTRACTS. We furnish everything. Valuable book FREE. NATIONAL SCIENTIFIC LABORATORIES, 1928W Broad, Richmond, Va.

AMAZING PROFITS Showing New Rayon Bedspreads, Beautifully Colored. Also Linen-like Tablecloths. Wash like oilcloth. You just take orders. We deliver and collect. Write at once for free selling outfit. Bestever Co., 165 Irving Park Station, Chicago.

$12.00 DAILY POSSIBLE SELLING NEW TABLECLOTH. WASHES LIKE OILCLOTH. NO LAUNDERING. **FREE** SAMPLES. JONES, 832 NORTH CLARK, CHICAGO.

AGENTS—UP TO $72 WEEKLY. INTRODUCING HOSIERY GUARANTEED 6 MONTHS OR REPLACED. 126 STYLES, COLORS FOR MEN, WOMEN, CHILDREN. UNDERSELL STORES. AUTO AND HOSE OFFERED FREE. CREDIT GIVEN. OUTFIT FURNISHED. WILKNIT HOSIERY, DEPT. C-4199, GREENFIELD, OHIO.

NATIONAL MANUFACTURER OF GUARANTEED QUALITY SHOES FOR ENTIRE FAMILY, ESTABLISHED 25 YEARS, WANTS REPRESENTATIVES. NEW TERRITORIES NOW OPEN. BIG PROFITS. Sales outfit, catalog, and valuable book sent free. Write—MASON SHOE MFG. CO., Dept. 31, Chippewa Falls, Wis.

MICHIGAN FARM LANDS FOR SALE

MONEY MADE IN MICHIGAN POTATOES. $10 DOWN NOW AND EASY TERMS BUYS LAND NEAR MARKETS, LAKES, STREAMS. WRITE TODAY. SWIGART & CO., M-601, 32 NO. STATE ST. BLDG., CHICAGO.

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PATENTS. BOOKLET FREE. HIGHEST REFERENCES, BEST RESULTS. PROMPTNESS ASSURED. SEND DRAWING OR MODEL FOR EXAMINATION AND ADVICE. WATSON E. COLEMAN, REGISTERED PATENT LAWYER, 724 NINTH STREET, WASHINGTON, D. C.

PATENTS—Write for our free Guide Book, "How To Obtain A Patent" and Record of Invention Blank. Send model or sketch and description of Invention for Inspection and Advice Free. Reasonable Terms. Prompt Service. Highest References. VICTOR J. EVANS & CO., 762 Ninth, Washington, D. C.

INVENTORS—Write For Our Guide Book, "How To Get Your Patent," and evidence of invention blank. Send model or sketch for Inspection and Instructions Free. Terms reasonable. RANDOLPH & CO., Dept. 412, Washington, D. C.

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PATENTS AND INVENTIONS

INVENTORS: WE HAVE BEEN IN BUSINESS 30 YEARS. IF YOUR INVENTION OR PATENT HAS MERIT, SEND DETAILS OR MODEL, OR WRITE. ADAM FISHER MFG. CO., 249 ENRIGHT, ST. LOUIS, MO.

HELP AND INSTRUCTION

$158.00 TO $225.00 MONTH. Steady work. U. S. Government Jobs. Men—women, 18—50. Common education usually sufficient. Sample coaching with list positions **FREE.** Write immediately. FRANKLIN INSTITUTE, Dept. F-1, Rochester, N. Y.

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FIREMEN, BRAKEMEN, BAGGAGEMEN (WHITE OR COLORED), SLEEPING CAR, TRAIN PORTERS (COLORED), $150—$250 MONTHLY. EXPERIENCE UNNECESSARY. 856 RAILWAY BUREAU, EAST ST. LOUIS, ILL.

HOW TO ENTERTAIN

Plays, musical comedies and revues, minstrels, comedy and talking songs, blackface skits, vaudeville acts, monologs, dialogs, recitations, entertainments, musical readings, make-up goods. Catalog free. T. S. Denison & Co., 623 So. Wabash, Dept. 43, Chicago.

TOBACCO

SWEAR OFF TOBACCO. NO MATTER HOW LONG YOU HAVE BEEN A VICTIM, NO MATTER HOW STRONG YOUR CRAVING, NO MATTER IN WHAT FORM YOU USE TOBACCO, THERE IS HELP FOR YOU. Just send postcard or letter for our Free Book. It explains everything. NEWELL PHARMACAL CO., Dept. 812, Clayton Station, St. Louis, Mo.

TOBACCO HABIT OVERCOME OR NO PAY. Over 500,000 used Superba Remedy to help stop Cigarettes, Cigars, Pipe, Chewing, Snuff. Write for full treatment on trial. Costs $2.00 if successful, nothing if not. Superba Co., L81, Baltimore, Md.

Now! Do Your Own Electric Nickel Plating

Introductory Offer ONLY $6.50 Plus Postage

For Plating Nickel, Brass, Copper, Silver, Gold, etc.

Make $150 to $500 a Week

No Experience Required. Do YOUR OWN Electro-Plating in Your Home, Garage, Office, or Place of Business. Electrically Deposit Metal—Nickel, Brass, Copper, Silver, or Gold. You can Successfully do all the plating on your Automobile, Electric Fixtures, Faucets, Spoons, Forks, Chandeliers, Tools, Coffee Urns, Surgical and Dental Instruments, Utensils, large or small, Iron Stoves, Music Instruments; recondition worn plating or plate New Work; do it instantly without interrupting the Service or without removing the parts to be plated with the

ALADDIN PORTABLE ELECTRO-PLATER

Simple and Economical to operate. Not a toy, but a practical Plating Outfit with which Perfect and Durable Work can be done. **Positively Guaranteed to do as we claim.** BE YOUR OWN BOSS! Build up a Profitable Aladdin Electro-Plating Business of your Own. This offers wonderful ECONOMY to users and BIG MONEY-MAKING possibilities to AGENTS. Thousands in Service since 1924. **Write for FREE Booklet and Testimonials and 30 Day Trial Offer Today.**

P. J. F. BATENBURG CO., Dept. 201, RACINE, WISCONSIN

—AGENTS— WANTED EVERYWHERE

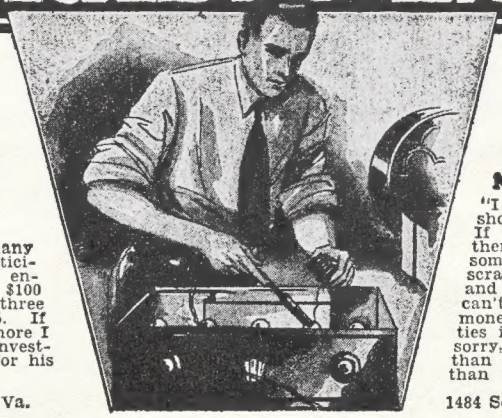
In answering any advertisement on this page it is desirable that you mention this magazine.

Be A *RADIO* Expert

Seldom Under $100 a Week

"My earnings in Radio are many times greater than I ever anticipated they would be when I enrolled. They seldom fall under $100 a week. My profits for the past three months were $577, $645, $465. If your course cost 4 or 5 times more I would still consider it a good investment. You give a man more for his money than anybody else."

E. E. WINBORNE,
1414 W. 48th St., Norfolk, Va.



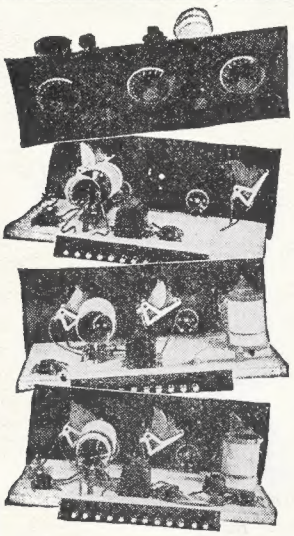
Making $400 a Month

"I really believe that every man should take your course in Radio. If he has anything in him at all there is every chance for him to get some place. The field hasn't been scratched and it is getting bigger and better every day. A man just can't go wrong. I was making good money but could see the opportunities in Radio. Believe me, I am not sorry, as I have made more money than ever before. I have made more than $400 each month."

J. G. DAHLSTEAD,
1484 So. 15th St., Salt Lake City, Utah.

Many make $50 to $200 a week

I GIVE YOU THE RADIO PARTS FOR A HOME EXPERIMENTAL LABORATORY



WITH THEM YOU CAN BUILD 100 CIRCUITS. 4 YOU BUILD ARE SHOWN HERE MY BOOK EXPLAINS THIS PRACTICAL, FASCINATING WAY OF LEARNING RADIO AT HOME

This is Radio's Biggest Year

Don't slave your life away for $25, $35 and $40 a week in a no-future job. You're foolish to be satisfied with less than $50, $60 or $75 a week for more than the short time it takes to get ready for Radio. That is what the good Radio jobs pay. And $50 to $75 a week is only the beginning. Many lead to as high as $200 to $250 a week.

Big Growth Making Hundreds of Fine Jobs Yearly

Over 300,000 jobs have already been made by Radio's amazing growth. It continues to grow and expand fast. This big growth can put you ahead fast. I have doubled and tripled salaries. I have shown hundreds how to make much more money in Radio than they were making in other fields. Let me show you what I can do for you.

Many Make $5 to $25 Extra A Week Almost at Once

The day you start I will show you how to do 10 Radio jobs most common in every neighborhood so you can begin making extra money. Frank Golden, 329 Walnut St., Newark, N. J., says, "I made over $900 in my spare time in about 10 months." This is the world-famous course that pays for itself.

I Will Train You at Home In Your Spare Time

Hold your job. My 50-50 method of training—one-half from lesson books and one-half from practical experiments using Six Big Outfits of Parts given without extra charge, makes learning at home easy, fascinating. It is unequaled. It gives you practical Radio experience while learning. You don't have to be a high school or college graduate. Many of my most successful graduates didn't finish the grades.

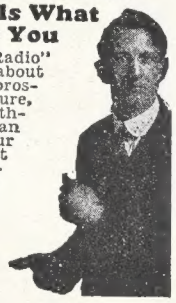
Your Money Back if Not Satisfied

My training is right up-to-the-minute with Radio's latest developments. Television, Talking Movies, Radio in Aviation, Screen Grid Tubes, A.C. Sets are included. It fits you for Radio factories, broadcasting stations, a spare-time or full-time business of your own, operating on board ship which gives you world-wide travel without expense, commercial land stations, research laboratories and many more branches. Every penny will be returned if after completion you are not satisfied with the lessons and instruction service.

FREE Book Tells What Radio Offers You

"Rich Rewards in Radio" gives you the facts about Radio, what your prospects are for the future, how you can get in without delay, what you can make. It explains our lifetime Employment Service after graduation and many other fine features. Get a copy AT ONCE.

J. E. SMITH, Pres.,
Dept. OBK
National Radio Institute
Washington, D.C.



J. E. SMITH

Jumps From $35 to $100 a Week

"It is certainly great sport to do Radio work and a profitable one too. I had the pleasure of earning $110 last week servicing and selling sets. I have made as high as $241 in two weeks. Before I entered Radio I was making $35 a week. You started me off on the right foot by giving me the knowledge every man should have to succeed in Radio."

J. A. VAUGHN,
4202 Arsenal St., St. Louis, Mo.

Mail this Coupon at Once

J. E. Smith, President,
National Radio Institute,
Dept. OBK
Washington, D. C.

Dear Mr. Smith: Without obligating me, send "Rich Rewards in Radio." your book on Radio's opportunities for big success.

Name _____

Address _____ Age ____

City _____ State _____

Genuine UNDERWOOD Below ½ Price

NOW ONLY $1 DOWN

Standard 4-Row Keyboard

Think of it! Only $1.00 brings the World's most famous Underwood Typewriter for 10 days' free trial. Lowest price and easiest terms ever offered. Pay only 10c a day on easy monthly payment plan. This is the full size standard Underwood 4-row keyboard typewriter, manufactured to sell for $100.00.

Typewriting Course FREE

We teach you free. Complete Home Study Course of the famous Van Sant Speed Typewriting System, fully illustrated, easily learned, used in schools, business offices, everywhere.

Do not confuse this 4-row standard office model Underwood with other frail machines originally costing only one-half as much.

Easy Terms
10 Day FREE Trial

This late model Underwood, specially priced at $39.90 (cash) is the lowest price ever quoted; has modern improvements, including 4-row keyboard, two-color ribbon, back spacer, ribbon reverse, tabulator, release, shift lock and many other improvements. Beautifully refinished and renewed. Looks and operates like brand new.

SEND AT ONCE!

This exceptional bargain offer is for a very limited time only. Remember—every one of these famous Underwoods is *fully guaranteed* and shipped on 10 days Free Trial. Send at once.

International Typewriter Exchange
231 West Monroe Street, Chicago, Ill. Dept. 211

I enclose $1 deposit. Send Underwood No. 4 at once for 10 day Free Trial. If I am not perfectly satisfied I can return it Express Collect and get my deposit back. If I keep it I will pay $3 a month until I have paid $44.90 in full.

Name.....Age.....

Address.....

Town.....State.....

A Test Every Man Past 40 Should Make

Medical authorities agree that 65% of all men past middle age (many much younger) are afflicted with a disorder of the prostate gland. Aches in feet, legs and back, frequent nightly risings, sciatic pains are some of the signs—and now a well-known American Scientist has written a remarkably interesting Free Book that tells of other symptoms and just what they mean. No longer should a man approaching or past the prime of life be content to regard these pains and conditions as inevitable signs of approaching age. Already more than 50,000 men have used the amazing method described in this book to restore their health and vigor—and to restore the prostate gland to its proper functioning. Send immediately for this book. If you will mail your request to The Electro Thermal Company, 3026 Morris Ave., Steubenville, Ohio—the concern that is distributing this book for the author—it will be sent to you absolutely free, without obligation. Simply send name and address. But don't delay, for the edition of this book is limited. If you live West of the Rockies, mail your inquiry to The Electro Thermal Co., 303 Van Nuys Building, Dept. 30-C, Los Angeles, California.

DEAF? READ THIS

Vibraphones Reduce Head Noises

A new and scientific discovery stimulates the hearing processes by utilizing sound waves through small silver devices that fit the ears perfectly. The vibrators are built inside the sound chambers. The instruments are so small that your friends will seldom know you are wearing them. Comfortable, easily put in the ears or removed. No wires. No batteries. No head bands. Nothing like them. This new and scientific triumph produces marvelous results. Head noises are reduced. And hearing gradually improves. Don't be handicapped or embarrassed another day by deafness. *Write for complete details.*

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Central National Bank Bldg. St. Louis, Mo.

TRAVEL FOR "UNCLE SAM"

$158 to $225 MONTH

Men—Boys 18 or over
See Your Country
Mail Coupon Today Sure
Many Gov't Jobs
Open to Women

COUPON

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Rush to me free information telling how I can get a U. S. Government Big Pay Job. Send list of jobs obtainable and full particulars.

Name.....

Address.....

"SURE! I get $100 a week in ELECTRICITY—

and I Learned At Home—the—L·L·Cooke Way"

WOULDN'T **you** like to be able to say truthfully what Ralph Crousore of Greencastle, Indiana, says? Wouldn't **you** be proud to say to **your** friends, "Sure, I get $100 a week in Electricity"? Wouldn't you like to be sitting on top of the world with a fine Big Money Job, a brilliant future, and all the good things of life within your grasp? Of course you would! Well, then, why don't you do like Crousore and thousands of other fellows no smarter than you have done—

Previous experience or higher education not needed to learn Electricity the L. L. COOKE Way. You can read, you can write—that's enough. This great Training is simple, clear and easily mastered. It trains you **thoroughly** to go into this great field and do the things for which the Big Money is paid.

Why Don't You, Too, Get Into Electricity?

Learn at home in your spare time with the famous L. L. COOKE "Work Sheet and Job Ticket" Method—the old-established but up-to-the-minute Electrical Training that has placed hundreds of men on Easy Street for life. There's nothing like it anywhere.

LIKE REAL SHOP TRAINING

It's simple, it's thorough, it's practical. Just like actual shop training. But it's all done in spare time in your own home with the Big Complete Outfit of Tools and Apparatus given to you without extra charge.

Hundreds of "Cooke Trained Men" earn $60 to $100 a week—some even more. Get started toward a job like one of these. Act today to increase your pay.

GET STARTED—MAIL COUPON

Get Big FREE Book that tells you how to start and shows how easy it is to get into this Big Pay field the L. L. COOKE Way. See the Big Outfit that's furnished, and read the famous Money Back Agreement. Get this great Pay-Raising Book. Mail coupon today sure!

$75 A Week

"Was working for $18 a week when I enrolled with you. Now I average $75 a week."
J. Wollaston, 104 Robin St., Dunkirk, N. Y.

$30 A Day

"Your Training has increased my earnings from $25 a week to over $30 a day."
G. W. Schnupp, 315 E. New, Lancaster, Pa.

L·L·COOKE SCHOOL OF ELECTRICITY
DEPT. 172 — 2150 LAWRENCE AVENUE — CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

MAIL COUPON FOR FREE BOOK

L. L. COOKE
SCHOOL OF ELECTRICITY
Dept. 172, **2150 Lawrence Ave., Chicago**

You may send me, entirely Free and fully prepaid, your book, "Secrets of Success in Electricity," together with facts about your Home Study Course in Electricity.

Name_____

Address_____

City_____ State_____ Age_____

Home port . . .

Sirs—whether you flit homeward through the air or return by the double rail—what's the first thing you demand at a long journey's end?

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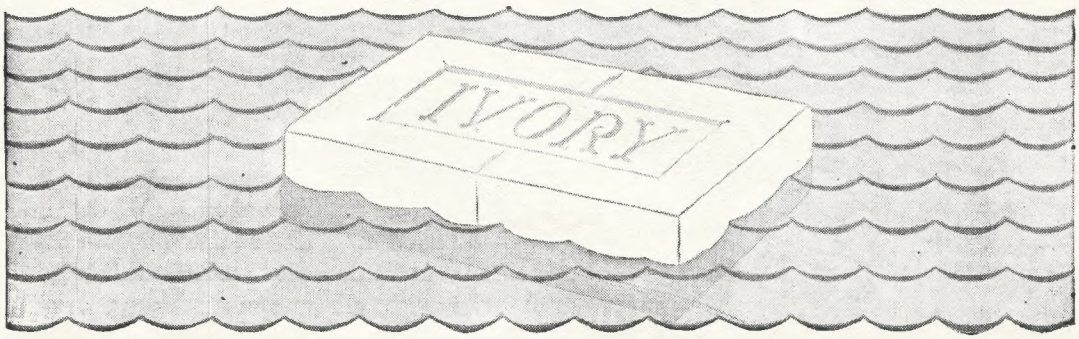

ARGOSY

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Taterleg flung aside his cook's apron and put on his gun; the boss's fight was his fight

A Man from the Bad Lands

Cowman, sheepman, beggarman, thief—such was Taterleg Wilson's dilemma as that former camp cook plunged into the turbulent affairs of the Buffalo rangeland

By GEORGE WASHINGTON OGDEN

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CHAPTER I.

A BACKSLIDING COWMAN.

THERE had been a lady in Taterleg Wilson's life, but as has happened with other ladies in the lives of other men, she had married somebody else when Mr. Wilson's back was turned. From the scent of her letter informing him of the event, Taterleg concluded she had married a barber. That fickleness of the lady's affections had been responsible for the conversion of a once loyal cowman into a calcu-

lating and ambitious person whose head was as full of the thought of sheep as a pillow is full of feathers.

It was in November that Taterleg had left Glendora, in the Bad Lands. He had been headed for Lander, on the shores of the Little Popo Agie, with designs on marrying his lady and opening an oyster parlor. While snailing along through the No Wood country, he was hit by the hardest blizzard that had ever hung icicles on his mustache and, being a camp-cook rather than a range rider, he lost his direction and went wandering.

Taterleg would have lost his life if luck had not led him into a sheep camp, where the sheepman's wife stood him in a corner of the wagon like a stick of wood, thawing him out so skillfully that he came through without the loss of even a toe nail.

It was in that Scotch flockmaster's camp, while he was waiting for spring to come, that the scented letter from the false lady finally found him. So, feeling himself a sort of outcast anyway, Taterleg concluded he might as well go the limit and turn sheepman. Accordingly, he worked that winter for the Scotch flockmaster, learning an amazing amount about sheep. When the lambing was over, the shearing well begun, and the weather fair on the range, Taterleg had saddled his strawberry roan horse and headed for the south, where there was a river and a town.

The Scotch flockmaster had told him that this town, Buffalo, was the sheep capital of that country. So Taterleg, backsliding cowman that he felt himself to be, had gone in that direction, and at long length had arived.

On the last afternoon of his long journey he had met with a lanky, lean cowhand who told him of an incipient war between nesters and cowmen on the Buffalo range toward which he was heading. Cowmen were slaughtering sheep in night raids, this cowhand informed Taterleg with great satisfaction, now and then including a herder or sheepman in the general clearance of pests off that range. This news had set Taterleg doubting.

IT was late when he arrived in Buffalo, and next morning he went out to scout around. Buffalo was not much of a town, sitting on a bleak knob of country where the wind hit it hard in winter and the sun curled its planks and shingles in summer without as much as the tempering shade of a single cottonwood tree. But there was evidence of a brisk business in wool.

All of this strengthened Taterleg in the conviction that he was, then and thenceforward, a sheepman of the broadest tread. He began to feel of his wallet and make calculations involving ewes, stepping pretty high as the sheep fever waxed in his veins.

Taterleg Wilson was a short man, and appeared shorter than he stood on account of the pronounced outward curve of his legs. He looked as if he had been clamped on a horse while very young and kept there until his legs set in that mold. Bright-eyed, hearty, alert, he moved as quickly as a fish.

His face was narrow, his nose large, and so sharp it whistled in the wind when he rode at a gallop. His long mustache was reddish-brown; his black hair was cropped close. His broad-brimmed hat with leather band settled down on his forehead as if to engulf him, though his heavy eyebrows seemed to have been grown with the express design of preventing that catastrophe.

He was a neatly dressed man in his

corduroys, which he wore folded into his bronze-topped boots, his green moleskin vest and corduroy coat. His necktie was like the flash of a redbird's wing.

So there he came prancing back on his bow legs to the hotel, feeling as chesty and important already as if he had five thousand sheep on the range and owned those long trains of wagons, hitched in strings of two and three, with the clip of wool which they were bringing in to turn into gold at forty cents a pound.

On the porch of the hotel the bald-headed clerk had spread what appeared to be part of a tent, and was bending over it to examine certain articles of clothing. Somebody had jumped his bill, Taterleg supposed. But the clerk said it was a sheepherder's outfit, left there two or three weeks ago to be called for. The man had struck a job with everything found, and had not needed his outfit just then.

"They burned him in his wagon out on the range last night," the clerk said, unmoved, as if he spoke of somebody losing a horse. "Feller rode in a little while ago to report to the sheriff. I was lookin' through his stuff to see if he'd left the address of any of his folks. Yeah, here's a picture of a girl with something wrote on it."

"Hell!" said Taterleg, passing the picture back. He felt as sick and dizzy as if he stood above the pathetic charred remains of the sheepherder, instead of the unlucky fellow's two or three shirts and Sunday coat. It might have been Taterleg himself, with the picture of Nettie Morrison being passed from hand to hand that way. For he still carried the picture of the loved lady along with his wallet, false as he knew her to be, married to a barber as he felt morally certain that she was.

"It must be hell, roastin' that way with no place to jump," he said.

"It ain't so bad—they always soak the dam' wagons with coal oil before they touch 'em off," the clerk explained the humane methods of cowmen.

"Where did it happen?" Taterleg inquired.

"Up in the foothills, twenty or thirty miles north of here. And there's plenty more of the same kind comin' to 'em if they don't git them dam' sheep out of here, I'm tellin' you, brother."

"I reckon that's so," Taterleg agreed, absently.

IF being a sheepman meant facing that kind of hazard, then it was not in him to be a sheepman; and if a cowman must countenance such "fighting," then he could not be a cowman, despite the allegiance of long association.

Taterleg's sad and lonesome conclusion was that he was nothing in the world but a cook.

"You know anybody that wants to hire a good camp-cook?" he inquired, putting the question so suddenly that the clerk started as if a voice had come out of the tent-roll at his feet.

"Cook?" the clerk repeated, staring blankly, his bald head glittering in the sun like a skinned onion, big eyebrows lifted in what appeared an incredulous stare.

"I said camp-cook," Taterleg informed him, with dignity.

"I didn't take you for a camp-cook," the clerk said, somewhat resentfully and distantly. "Somebody was tellin' me Colonel Beal Twitchell was in need of a cook. I couldn't say how much there is to the story, but I guess you could find out for yourself if you was to ask him. I think he's in town

—he was, a little while ago. Yes, there's his team and buckboard hitched in front of the courthouse."

CHAPTER II.

BEAL TWITCHELL'S LAW.

COLONEL BEAL TWITCHELL was a large, horse-heavy man with dewlaps on his jowls. He had married into the Army, his wife being a major's daughter, but his own title had no more military significance than a newspaper colonelcy of the present day. He was a cow colonel, and nothing more.

His face was broad and full, with an habitual forbidding, scowling expression around the eyes; his mustache and eyebrows were evenly white almost the tile-red of his face, his hair thick and long, oddly streaked with almost full black and pure white, as if the crop had ripened unevenly. His age was about sixty-three. Colonel Twitchell was dressed that morning in a well-tailored suit of banker's gray, and Taterleg estimated that his low-crowned white hat with four-inch brim and fine silk band must have cost him fifty dollars.

The old cowman was in a testy humor that morning, having just come from a set-to with the sheriff concerning rustlers and nesters, between whom Colonel Twitchell drew no line. A man of less experience with the old cow colonel's kind than the wayfarer from the Bad Lands might have hesitated about hitting him for a job, but Taterleg did not pause.

Taterleg had a long line of more or less honorable cowmen to whom he referred, Twitchell nodding at mention of certain names, especially of those men whom Taterleg had served in the Cherokee country and the short-grass region of Kansas.

"Can you make a pepper-pot?" Twitchell inquired.

Taterleg declared himself to be proficient in that art, even going so far as to name the Mexican from whom he had learned it.

At that he hired Taterleg, mentioning forty dollars a month. Taterleg was so deeply moved by the sight of an old-time cowman that he was shot to the marrow with an acute loneliness for the range, the clatter of tin dishes and the chaffer of cowhands as they squatted around the fire. He would have been willing to work for almost nothing to get back into that good old company.

"What name are you travelin' under now?" Twitchell inquired.

"Wilson's the name I was born under, and Wilson's the name I've always traveled under," Taterleg informed him with considerable hauteur.

"I reckon you've got some kind of a handle to it?"

"They named me a name when I was born," Taterleg replied, for it would have taken a red-hot branding-iron to draw from him the confession that his christened name was Lovelace. "But up in the Bad Lands they called me Taterleg. I guess that's good enough for this man's country."

"They orta called you Doughnut, from the shape of them dam' legs of yourn. Well, git your traps, Tater. Me and you, we're goin' to start home in a minute."

When Taterleg reported back at the buckboard a few minutes later with his horse and gunnysack, Twitchell insisted that he stow the sack under the seat, ride with him and tow the horse along behind.

It was "only a little piece"

to the ranch, Twitchell said; some seventeen miles.

TWITCHELL talked on easy terms with his cook, turning many a sharp glance on him as they drove along the dusty road, broad and well trampled, as if cut by the passing of large bands of sheep. As if to probe him on his loyalty, Twitchell began a bitter arraignment of the nesters, whom he cursed as thieves, brand-burners and outcasts of the lowest type.

"Did you ever know a cowman back in that country you come from by the name of Brady?" Twitchell inquired.

"There used to be a Jim Brady down on the Arkansaw," Taterleg replied. "I wasn't acquainted with him, but I knew him by sight—a big rough-and-ready feller with gray whiskers. He used to wear a fur cap, winter and summer."

"That's the man," Twitchell said, nodding ponderously. "Did you know his boy, Austin?"

"Never knew he had a boy."

"He had a kind of excuse for one. He's out here, among them squatters and thieves—not only one of 'em, but the backbone of 'em. If I could break that feller I'd have 'em all on the run."

"He's strayed off a long ways from the old man's camp," Taterleg commented, surprised and somewhat shocked by the news.

"In more ways than one. I was over to see the sheriff about him this morning. He says I've got to have evidence before he can do anything to stop Brady's thievin'. Well, I'll git it on him—I'll git it on him if I have to bury a hide behind his dam' shanty myself!"

Taterleg had a rather low opinion of that kind of evidence, but he made no comment, and Twitchell went on complaining about the lack of courage and backbone among cowmen and cowhands of those days. If he had a few of the old hands who came there with him from Texas, he'd clean the nesters out of there in spite of the sheriff. But those hearty gun-slingers from the Big Bend were gone—all used up, as the cowman expressed it: some shot in fights, some frozen in blizzards, the rest drifted off to wherever old cowhands finally brought up, which was something past the cowman's knowledge.

With Twitchell still harping on that tune of strong-handed nesters and weak-spined cowhands, they arrived at the ranch house. This was an imposing structure in Taterleg's eyes, a long building with a broad porch in front of it, the kitchen at one end, low and squat, with a tall stovepipe projecting above the chimney. It looked as if it might have been the beginning of the entire layout, and that beginning made a long time ago.

Taterleg was somewhat disconcerted by the sudden appearance of three tow-headed girls and a snub-nosed boy, whose ages ranged along between six and fifteen, the boy being the major of the bunch.

Twitchell told him his field of endeavor lay straight ahead of him inside the kitchen door. This information fell like a snowslide over Taterleg's spirits. He didn't like the appearance of those wall-eyed kids and, more than that, he hadn't counted on cooking for a household outfit over a kitchen range.

"I AIN'T much of a family man," Taterleg said, standing there all spraddled out as if he had struck the ground with the intention of going on immediately, gunnysack in his hand.

"This gang 'll break you to ride," Twitchell told him, running his eye over that detachment of his entourage with a gleam of humorous pride.

"Can you make fudge?" demanded the eldest of the girls, who might have been thirteen. She was a big-boned, bold-faced youngster, and boisterous as a calf, Taterleg knew by the look of her mottled light eyes.

"I ain't long on cake, sister," Taterleg replied.

The answer brought a loud, derisive laugh, in as perfect concert as if the gang had been in rehearsal for the event a month ahead of his coming.

"Well, what in the hell is the stuff if it ain't cake?" Taterleg appealed to the cowman, who was shaking with laughter that made the springs of his buckboard squeak.

The cowman explained, with a certain measure of sympathy.

"Well, as long as I've throwed my leg over this animile I'll ride him," Taterleg said, "but I give you notice right now that my cookin' is for *men*. I cook for men with teeth in their jaws, rough cookin' for rough riders."

"Do your worst, Tater," Twitchell encouraged him, pleased, it appeared, by his new cook's straightforward manner. "I'll put that gang up ag'in' anything you can throw out of a skillet."

Twitchell drove off toward the sheds with that, and Taterleg went into the kitchen, unbuckled his gun and hung it on a peg beside the door. Mrs. Twitchell, attended by the children, who were quiet but packed to the eyes with devilment, Taterleg could see.

Whatever she had been in her Army days, Mrs. Twitchell was a cow woman now. She was short and fleshy, and walked with a rolling gait. Her face was small, fat, round and red; her heavy black hair, not yet showing a line of gray, was adorned by a large Spanish comb. She displayed numerous rings with flashing stones, and wore a voluminous silk kimono, which she gathered about her and held circumspectly against contact with the queer customer who had come to preside over her kitchen.

After showing the strangest specimen of cook that ever had come her way around the kitchen, Mrs. Twitchell told him to get himself some lunch. She would take care of Colonel Twitchell's wants for that meal, she said.

Taterleg's name she appeared to class rather low, although it supplied uncommon diversion for the children. She gave general directions for the meal which she called dinner before gathering her large-figured garment about her well-nourished form and departing. The children tagged after her, showing the whites of their eyes to Taterleg like so many hog-tied calves.

Taterleg opened a can of salmon and sat at the kitchen table. He considered it very indelicate of a lady to speak of this meal as lunch. In his lexicon the noon feeding was dinner, and lunch was salt herring and stale cheese, picked over by bums in the back ends of saloons. Likewise, that sundown eating-event was supper, and nothing but supper, in any honest camp-cook's life. But if she got any excitement out of calling supper dinner, let her buck to it.

IT didn't take Taterleg long to line up the evening meal when it came time, as he calculated by the sun, to put the pots on. He was busy with it, about five o'clock, when there came a commotion of youngsters pelting into the house like yearlings into a corral. They

set up an excited shouting for their father, who was snoozing.

Taterleg tuned his ear to pick up what was going on in the remote part of that long house, and heard the name of Brady, and a roaring from Colonel Twitchell, accompanied by expostulations from his wife. He caught a phrase of hers, "too old for that kind of business"—which he concluded to be fighting business, and nothing else.

That being the case, Taterleg took off his apron and put on his gun. The boss's fight was his fight; it always had been that way in his loyal, if not exceedingly long, life. He went out the kitchen door.

A man on horseback was waiting at the broad gate which shut the Twitchell homestead from the trespasses of cattle. He was an alert, cheerful-looking man, with something friendly in his face that struck Taterleg as he stood on the kitchen porch awaiting the appearance of Colonel Twitchell. This was the boss's business; Taterleg would wait there until wanted, like a handy implement or extra gun.

Colonel Twitchell came out, frowzy, rumpled and red-eyed from his broken sleep, gun dangling in a chafed holster against his thigh. As the talk grew louder and began to become abusive on Colonel Twitchell's part, Taterleg concluded it was time to draw near. That young man looked capable of going through a corral full of slow-gaited cowmen like Twitchell without stopping to smooth his hair.

"You're the trespasser in this country, you ain't got any business here," Twitchell was roaring as Taterleg ranged up behind him. "If my cattle break down your dam' waar fences and eat up your dam' hay, they're only takin' back their own."

"I've been trying to tell you, Colonel, that your men cut my wire fence and drove the cattle into my field," young Brady protested mildly. "They cut the wire around my alfalfa stacks and drove them in there, and they did me considerable damage before I—before I found out they were there."

"If my men cut your fence I glory in their backbone!" Twitchell exulted.

"I'm willing to leave the damage to arbitration," Brady proposed.

"You're a kind and generous young feller, ain't you?" Twitchell derided. "Well, in the first place, how 're you goin' to prove they was my cows? You got any witnesses?"

"Yes, I've got five," Brady replied calmly.

"I don't care a dam' if you've got fifty. The word of a nester ain't worth a burned dollar bill in this country."

"No, not nesters. I've got five head of cattle with your brand on them."

"If you have you'd better turn 'em loose as quick as the Lord 'll let you!" Colonel Twitchell said, not with bluster, but with a cold portent of immediate and heavy retribution. "They ain't the first cattle of mine you've got your hands on, even if they are the first you've ever owned up to stealin'."

"Your men overlooked these five head in their hurry to get away when I discovered them. They're going to stay in my corral till you settle the damages in full."

Brady gave it to the cowman dispassionately, but his manner was so hard that Taterleg felt the bristles begin to rise along his back in premonition of trouble. Twitchell's wrath rose red to his heavy face. He made a movement as if going for his gun, halted it, sawed his arm indecisively,

as if his passion had not yet mounted to the shooting point.

"YOU'LL turn them cattle of mine out as quick as you can ride back there and open the gate," Twitchell said in the low, even tone of a man primed and ready.

"You'll get the cattle when you come around and settle the bill, not before. Unless you replevin them, of course."

"I carry my writ of 'plevy right here"—Twitchell patted his gun—"and I carry my court and my law right here. It's the only law I recognize."

"It don't go with me," said Brady.

Colonel Twitchell grunted as if he had been jolted in the wind. He snatched his gun out with surprising celerity, and certainly would have emptied his visitor's saddle at the first shot if Taterleg had not jumped in and struck Twitchell's arm. It was a hard blow, struck from beneath, intended to deflect the shot over Brady's head. Taterleg put so much steam into it that the gun was knocked out of the cowman's hand as it was discharged. It whirled over the gate and fell in the road beside Brady's horse.

"Hell, Colonel! That boy ain't *got* no gun!" Taterleg said, shocked by the cowman's unchivalric assault.

Twitchell stood wrathfully speechless at this unprecedented interference by a common hired hand. But he was still for a moment only. His face was purple in apoplectic passion, his eyes were bulging as he rushed Taterleg with a choking roar.

Taterleg flipped out his gun, jabbed it against the cowman's paunch, and brought him up short as if he had run against a fence.

"That boy ain't *got* no gun," Taterleg repeated slowly, impressively, as if to drive the enormity of Twitchell's attempted act into the cowman's bull-thick head.

Brady swung over, swept his long arm, and recovered the cowman's gun, with all the ease and grace of the most finished rider on the range. He reined up to the gate and offered the weapon to its owner, not even troubling to break it and throw out the remaining cartridges.

"Colonel Twitchell, here's your law," said Brady, not even the glimmer of a grin on his face, not a spark of laughter in his eyes at the cowman's discomfiture.

Twitchell grabbed the gun ungraciously, wheeling on Taterleg as if to put an end to his interference, but reconsidering when he saw Taterleg's competent tool ready for the expected emergency. The old cowman's wrath seemed to cool out of his face, which was turning a dusty gray. He jabbed nervously to find his holster, shoved his gun into it with the vindictive frustration of a man who had been called, and called hard.

"You turn them cattle out," he said, glowering over the gate at Brady. "That's all I've got to say to you!"

Brady was looking down at the short, bow-legged man whose quick action had saved his life. His face was grave; he seemed to be on the point of words, which he reconsidered and left unsaid. As he turned his horse from the gate he raised his hand in gesture of acknowledgment for the incalculable service, wheeled into the road, and galloped away.

"You're fired," Colonel Twitchell announced, facing Taterleg with new-kindled wrath. "A man that works for me has got to fight *for* me, not ag'in' me. You git to hell out of here!"

"Cowman," said Taterleg, calmly stowing away his gun with slow and steady hand, watchful eyes on his moment-before boss to read his intentions, "I wouldn't mix a mess of biscuits for you if you was to stand on your hind legs and beg like a dog."

CHAPTER III.

ACCUSED AS A SPY.

TATERLEG grabbed his gunny-sack and streaked for the corral to get his horse. The Mexican wrangler pointed out the saddle and bridle with a distant and contemptuous manner which told Taterleg the old cuss had seen that gun-play at the gate.

Feeling that it was a good place to get away from without showing too much of his back, Taterleg rode through the big gate, which a man could open without dismounting, closing it after him with the meticulous regard for such things around a cow ranch.

He swung his strawberry-roan to point back to Buffalo, and rode away without betraying his suspicion, and his fear, if the whole truth must be told, that either Twitchell or that old Mexican would take a shot at him to even the score.

Nothing happened; Taterleg proceeded nervously until a turn in the road led him behind a hill and cut off the house. He had not gone more than a mile when he met a young man of the unmistakable T w i t c h e l l brand riding in hot leather toward the ranch. This young fellow appeared to be twenty-two or three; he had a petulant lip and a broncho eye, which he turned on Taterleg with suspicion. He did not return the friendly greeting of the road which Taterleg passed to him, but whipped around the bend out of sight, although not altogether out of Taterleg's mind.

There had been a cloud of something in that young man's face, a strange blending of anxiety and fear. Something had sent him riding hard toward home. Well, whatever it was, it was their trouble, not his.

He decided not to try to make it to Buffalo that night. Along the road somewhere he would find somebody who would take him in for the night, Taterleg believed, recalling the settlers' houses along the river. If not, it would not hurt him to let the horse blow at the roadside for a few hours, where he could pick up something to eat, and then push on to town.

But again his plans were subject to revision by forces beyond his control. He had not proceeded more than five miles in the direction of Buffalo when there came a clatter and rush of hard-ridden horses behind him which made his own mount start with a jump and shoot off as if he smelled danger. Taterleg hauled him up with firm hand, looking back to see who came riding in such a rush.

Curiously enough, Taterleg had not been thinking of his late interference with Twitchell's gun-play. The episode was finished; it had only been a simple act of friendliness, as much to the benefit of Twitchell as to Brady, as Taterleg considered it, for he did not want it said of any boss of his that he had slung his gun on an unarmed man.

Now it looked as if Twitchell had reconsidered it and was coming after him hot-foot to reopen the case. The old man was accompanied by his Mexican wrangler and the young chap whom Taterleg had met a few miles

back. He stopped to await their arrival.

THEY galloped up in a moment, guns out threateningly.

"You're goin' back with us," Beal Twitchell announced. "Take that gun off of him," he directed his son.

Taterleg lifted his hand forbiddingly as the young man pressed forward.

"I never let any man grab a gun off of me in my life, cowman," Taterleg said, "and I ain't goin' to let any man do it now. I don't know what you've got ag'in' me, but you've got me dead to rights, and I've lived long enough to know when it's my day to fight. I'll hand you my gun, cowman, but don't try to take it out of the leather." He passed the weapon to the elder Twitchell. "Now, what's eatin' you?"

"I'll learn you to come to my house hirin' out as a cook to spy for a set of dam' nesters!" Twitchell replied.

"You ain't more than half as bright as I took you to be, cowman," Taterleg said.

"You knew dam' well that feller Brady shot one of my men last night."

"I didn't know it, but I guess he had it comin' to him."

"You're goin' back with us," Twitchell declared, with intention so firm there was no disputing him.

"Ride on," said Taterleg.

Nothing more was said on either side as they rode back to the ranch. It was after sundown when they arrived. Twitchell directed the wrangler to take Taterleg's horse along with the others, then motioned the captured cook into the kitchen.

"Go out there and cut off some beef and fry us up some supper," Twitchell ordered. "And move them frog legs of yourn like you was goin' somewheres, or I'll split your ears and hook your heels in 'em!"

Taterleg went about his distasteful job, saying nothing, although he was doing some tall thinking. He knew that young Twitchell had brought home the news of last night's shooting, in which Taterleg now gloried deep down in his system.

The doctor arrived ahead of his patient, and was easing his appetite when the wagon bearing the wounded cow-hand arrived. Twitchell went out with the doctor, leaving his son to guard the cook.

THE young man, whom his father addressed sometimes as Wesley, but more frequently as Wes, lolled in a kitchen chair, a mean, overbearing look in his eyes. He was dangerous as an ill-natured man placed in power over a helpless one could possibly be. Taterleg was fully conscious of his perilous situation; he stepped around the kitchen as gingerly as if walking over cockleburs barefooted. He cautiously answered the sharp course of questioning to which Wes Twitchell subjected him.

Craftier than his daddy, that strip of half-cured bacon, Taterleg thought; a boy who was itching to kill a man as eagerly as any young Indian ever desired a scalp. If diplomacy could be depended on, Taterleg resolved, his was not going to be the scalp. But Beal Twitchell had lived by the law of the gun so long that he would not hesitate now to leave another victim of its inexorable rule lying dead in some wild spot which even a wandering cow-hand might not cross for years.

This prescience of his coming end seemed to be verified by Twitchell's return to the kitchen after fifteen or twenty minutes.

"Come along with us," Twitchell malevolently ordered. "We're goin' to give you a chance to prove whether you are straight, or as crooked as them dam' bow legs of yourn. Git your dam' louse-cage and come on."

Taterleg put his hat on, pulling it down hard in resentful repudiation of the charge laid to it. No matter what camps his head had lain in, or what company he had sat in, he had lived clean, and he was ready to die clean. He said so in words as plain as the language contained, staring boldly at Beal Twitchell. The old cowman gave him a curious look, not entirely lacking in admiration and approval, but Wes received this protest with a low, derisive laugh.

There were five horses in the yard near the kitchen porch, one of them Taterleg's strawberry-roan. The Mexican wrangler and two cow-hands were waiting. The wrangler remained behind as the others, Taterleg in their midst, rode out of the gate and turned in the direction of town.

No explanation was offered as they swung along in a gallop, Taterleg flanked by Twitchell and his son, a man closing up the rear, the other member of the expedition riding ahead.

They had ridden fifteen or twenty miles, according to Taterleg's calculation, when they pulled up before a gate which closed the highway outlet of a barbed-wire lane. Down this lane a considerable distance—it looked in the dark to be all of a quarter of a mile—a house could be seen half-hidden in a clump of trees. What with the trees and the darkness this habitation would have escaped the sharpest eye from the highway except for a portion of it which seemed to be lighted up as for some festive occasion.

As the raiding party approached the house down the lane, Taterleg saw that this illumination was confined to one room, that on the left of the front door. The window shades of that room were up, if there were any, just as if the man who lived there hadn't an enemy in the world, the bright light from within falling on the cottonwood trees and out into the dusty approach to the door. While no explanatory word had been spoken during the long, hard ride, Taterleg knew it was Austin Brady's home.

NOT a movement in or about the place had given any sign that Brady, his live stock or his dogs, had heard the cowman's party approach. About fifty yards from the white front door, which stood in the center of the long, low house, the party halted.

"I guess you know this place," Twitchell said in low voice, turning to Taterleg. "I'm here to take them cows of mine, and I'm here to git Brady, and git him right. He's stole the last head of my cattle he's ever goin' to steal. You say he ain't no friend of yourn, you claim you ain't connected with these nestin' thieves in any manner or form. Well, here's where you git your chance to prove it.

"Go in there and git Brady. That's all you've got to do to make yourself solid with me and all the other cowmen on this range—git Brady. Git him dead or alive! Leave your horse stand here. Wes, give him his gun."

Taterleg took the gun with a feeling of turbulent, tangled emotions, on the crest of which rode the hard fact that this was the end of him. One way or the other, the end. He swung off his horse and started toward the door, with unfaltering, unhesitating step,

not stopping to exchange with Beal Twitchell what he knew would be, in any case, a wasted word.

CHAPTER IV.

A WALKING TARGET.

TATERLEG fully understood, and in a measure excused, the old cowman's condemnation of him. He had been partly to blame for it himself, largely to blame, in fact, by his interference with the boss's business and saving Brady's life. But it was a hard ordeal the grim and vengeful old scoundrel was driving him into now—as outrageous and villainous as ever was conceived in the mind of man.

If he hailed Brady or knocked on the door, Twitchell would take it as proof of friendship and collusion between him and the nester, and would kill him where he stood; if he opened the door and entered without word or sound, Brady would shoot him dead on the threshold. That was as little as could be expected of a man conscious of the peril in which he lived—if the young devil was conscious of it, which he didn't seem to be, judging from that light.

Judging from that light!

It struck Taterleg Wilson like an inspiration. His heart gave a hop as if it had started again after a long suspension. As he advanced carefully, slowly, toward the door, he broke his gun, for he distrusted Wes Twitchell's honesty, reloading it from the cartridges in his belt. Twitchell and the others were following him, with the same careful caution. They were taking no chances on his breaking for the side fence and getting away in the dark.

In spite of the light coming through the two windows, it was dark enough over there to the right, among the trees, to encourage such an attempt. For a moment Taterleg was tempted to make a feint of stumbling, drop flat, roll over to the fence and try to crawl through. But he didn't know how close the wires were strung, and he didn't want to die hung up in a wire fence. No; better to go on with the scheme, desperate as it was, that had set his heart thumping when it popped into his mind like a shot.

A few yards from the door Taterleg stopped, listening for a sound inside. There was not even the rustle of a paper to tell whether Brady sat reading in fancied security beside his bright lamp. Then Taterleg stepped forward, his heart hammering with smothering violence, to win or lose, live or die, by the sudden execution of his plan.

He had not given a thought to the probability of the door's being locked, and felt no emotion of relief when he tried the knob and felt the portal yield. Carefully pushing the door open with his left hand until he had a little glimpse of the lighted room, he set his toe against it and kicked it wide open, his moment for caution having passed.

As he stood revealed in the light for a second to the suspicious cowman behind him, Taterleg jerked a shot at the l a m p . The shattered glass fell tinkling to the floor in the pause of silence, s c a r c e l y the duration of a heart-beat, that followed. Taterleg threw himself into the room, flat on his belly, as the guns roared behind him and bullets crashed into the partition wall a few feet beyond where he lay.

"Don't shoot, Brady!" Taterleg yelled, his time for caution having

passed, and no mistake. "This is a friend—don't shoot!"

Twitchell was yelling orders to "Git him, men! Git him!" In the house there was no movement, no sound. But Taterleg was certain, before he snapped that shot into the lamp, there had been somebody in that room. He scrambled like a lizard across the room and went feeling along the wall for a door, Twitchell and his men pitching shot after shot into the dark door, some of them hitting the floor around him as close as a juggler's knives.

IN that wall where his fingers were groping he found a door, and it was wide open. Taterleg made a rush for the outside, neither knowing nor caring what lay ahead. He was centered that moment on getting out of range of the bullets which were pelting in his rear.

Taterleg burst into the open, finding nobody there, nor anything to stop him from going right on to New Mexico if he felt inclined that way. But he hauled up short, for something new was starting up in front of the house.

The shooting had stopped suddenly; there was the sound of voices, among them the tones of Twitchell and Brady ringing in familiar cadence on the camp-cook's ear. He followed the wall of the house around the angle, where he ran up against a gate which, together with the building, made the inner barrier of the lane.

It looked to Taterleg as if the lately silent and unpeopled night had sprung suddenly alive with men. Men were standing all around, surrounding the cowman and his gang, holding them under the plenty good argument of long guns which looked as if they might be double-barreled. Brady was holding a lantern shoulder high, looking under it into the revealed face of the old cowman. Taterleg surmised, and correctly, that the young buckaroo must have had the lantern all ready and burning, hidden under a box.

"We were expecting you, Twitchell," Brady was saying. "After what passed between us this afternoon I thought it would be wise to have a reception committee ready. You'll always find one when you take a run down here."

"You take the trick," Twitchell admitted, "but I ain't played out my hand. You goin' to turn them cattle over to me?"

"When you make full settlement for the damages I've stood," Brady told him.

"You got the drop on me to-night," Twitchell growled, "but I'll put every rustlin' nester of you where you belong before I'm through. No, I ain't a goin' to pay you a cent of damages, now nor any other time."

He turned his horse and started to ride off with his surly son and pretty thoroughly scared pair of cow-hands at his heels. Taterleg opened the gate and passed the cowman a hail.

Twitchell pulled up short, evidently surprised to see his late cook standing there with a whole hide. Brady, lowering the lantern to light the new arrival's face, gave him a friendly grin. Taterleg came forward, twitching at his gun.

"Cowman," he said, "you've made an enemy out of a man that would 'a' been your friend and fought for you and with you as long as he could snort. You put me to the hardest run a man ever was drove into to-night, and I'll nick your tail for it if it takes me the rest of my life!"

"Yelp, you dam' little bench-leggid

fiste!" Twitchell said, with the scorn of a man who felt himself a mighty one, and a secure one, in spite of this night's blow-up.

"Brady, when did you set eyes on me for the first time in your life?" Taterleg demanded.

"This afternoon at Colonel Twitchell's gate, when you knocked the gun out of his hand and saved my life," Brady replied with solemn gratitude.

"Did any of you men ever see me before?" Taterleg pushed his inquiry.

No, the nesters all bore testimony that he was a stranger to their eyes. All of which evidence in support of Taterleg's integrity appeared to have precious little weight with Beal Twitchell, who snorted his discount of it, raked his horse with his big Mexican spurs, and galloped off up the lane.

Taterleg explained his connection with the cowman, and the reason for the ordeal which had been set for him, making it plain in a few words.

"I'm sorry I had to bust your lamp, Brady," he said in concluding his remarks.

"It beat gittin' busted yourself," somebody spoke out of the dark.

The rest of them said you're right, it did, and danged if that wasn't the slickest trick they ever heard of, and they hoped Taterleg's time and opportunity of putting the nick in Twitchell's tail would come soon, and that they could be on hand to hear him howl.

BRADY ventured a polite, a very polite and delicate, inquiry on Taterleg's intentions so far as the remainder of that night was involved, not going beyond the sunrise of the morrow by even the shadow of suggestion.

Taterleg explained that he had started out, after getting fired, with designs on Buffalo, but had hoped somebody along the way would take him in for the night.

"Turn your horse in the corral back there and leave your saddle on the kitchen porch," said Brady.

The two were soon pulled up before a blaze in the fireplace, in the room to the right of the front door as one approached the house down the lane.

"You're purty well holed up here, anyhow," Taterleg remarked appreciatively, running his knowing eye around the room.

It was not a large room, but snug and homelike, the crudeness of its log walls almost hidden by many Indian blankets and rugs. There were a few pictures, several guns of various types, mainly the antique and picturesque, although two rifles of the most modern pattern had prominent and convenient place among them, one hanging beside the door, the other above the mantelshelf. There were rugs on the floor, some of Indian weave familiar to Taterleg's eye, others of strange and alien design; a few armchairs, two of them leather, one of which the guest was occupying at that moment.

"Yeah, you sure have got a mighty fine place here, Austin; better than your pa ever had down on the Arkansaw, better than I ever saw him livin' in, anyhow. I don't know how he spread out after I left there. That was a long time ago."

Brady regarded him queerly throughout this little speech, which seemed almost a soliloquy, the strain of it was so reminiscent.

"Did you know my father?" the young rancher asked, a little severely it appeared to Taterleg, as though he believed here was a wandering scout who had heard of the old man, and was

playing on a memory for some reason of his own.

"No, not as man to man, for I was only a kid of a feller in them days. But I've seen him many a time—a tall, rangy man with gray whiskers. He used to wear a fur cap, summer and winter, in them days."

Brady nodded affirmation of the terse description. "How did you know I was Jim Brady's son?"

"Twitchell was tellin' me, when it come out I knew your father back in them days. He seemed to either know your pa, or else he'd seen him, same as me. I could see something suspicious of me in Twitchell's old pinto eye from the mention of your name."

"Yes, it was easy enough for him to suspect you after that. He hasn't got any better sense."

"Your pa still runnin' cattle back there in Kansas?"

"He died the spring following the big winter kill of '88. It cleaned us out."

"I'm double sorry to hear it," Taterleg said sincerely. "Well, well, do you read all them books?" said Taterleg, turning the subject with brisk, delicate interest.

"Why," said Brady, with a short, shaky little laugh, his face still averted, "I've only got a handful. Most of them are my college text books. I left before I finished, and they're all I've got to show for my grand ambition."

FROM that topic the talk turned to sheep. Brady said he had come there with the scrapings of the wreck, looking for an opening to go into the cattle business, but soon saw that cattlemen there, as most range cattlemen everywhere, were playing a losing game, so he had turned his calculations to sheep. Taterleg confessed a weakness in that direction himself, which led up to a recounting of his experience on the sheep range during the past winter.

"I headed down here all set to git me a piece of homestead land on the river and go into the sheep business myself," Taterleg said. "But I kind of changed my mind on the subject when I heard about them cowmen burnin' a sheep herder in his wagon on the range last night."

"Where was that?"

"North of Buffalo twenty or thirty miles, they said."

"I hadn't heard of it," said Brady, deeply interested. "Did Twitchell have anything to say about it?"

"He kind of gloried around, but he didn't say much."

"The old devil knew all about it; he claims that range up in the foothills. Well, he lays claim to about everything outdoors around here, when it comes down to cases. And he's got title to exactly one section of land up there where his house stands."

"Some spreader!" said Taterleg.

"Yes, he's spread over more than he can hold. He'll never keep sheep off this range by burning those poor devils of herders. How long did you say you were with that sheepman, learnin' the business?"

"Well, let me see: I left Glendora in November, and that blizzard caught me when I'd been on the road about two weeks. You see, I was headed for Lander, to marry a girl down there. And I was fool enough to think I could ride it and make it in time. Let me tell you one thing, boy: when you start out to marry a girl, take a train. Take a train, and git there as quick as wheels 'll carry you. Don't you tarry on the way."

"If you do, somebody else is likely to cut in," said Brady, nodding understandingly.

"A barber," said Taterleg, with recriminatory emphasis.

"I'm mighty sorry, old feller."

"As I was tellin' you, I come down here figurin' high and wide on sheep, but the news of the way they tret that poor feller last night changed me around sudden, and I hired out to cook for old Beal Twitchell. But after the way him and that wall-eyed boy of his used me to-night I've changed back to sheepman, and I've changed clean to the backbone.

"I'm goin' to git me a band of sheep and put 'em on this range, and I'm goin' to plug a hole in the first cowman that lights a match in a mile of where I'm at!"

Brady was so pleased by this manly declaration that he shook hands with his guest, giving him a firm grip and a friendly one.

"I'm outlawed on this range already," Taterleg said, knowing well that it was true, "and I might as well shoot my wad first as last. Twitchell says all you fellers along the river are banded in a rustlin' gang. Is *anybody* around here stealin' any cows and calves?"

"Yes, I'm afraid there are a few of them at it."

"Well, you'll find a few ornery cusses everywhere."

"But the cowmen judge this settlement by the worst characters in it. They do it because they want to, not because they believe it. If they can make the rest of the people in the State believe we're a gang of outlaws living off their herds, there'll be nothing said or done when they ride in here and try to wipe us out, as they're planning right now to do, to my positive knowledge."

"Let 'em come, the sooner the quicker," said Taterleg. "I bit a bullet for Beal Twitchell to-night, and if he comes a runnin' into it that will save me the trouble of campin' on his trail."

TO BE CONTINUED NEXT WEEK.

Mighty Crabs

SO strong are some of the land crabs inhabiting small islands near Formosa and other portions of the China Sea that they are able to nip off the fingers of those who grasp them carelessly. These crabs work their way up the trunks of coconut trees, nip off the young nuts, which will crack as they strike the ground, and then descend to feast.

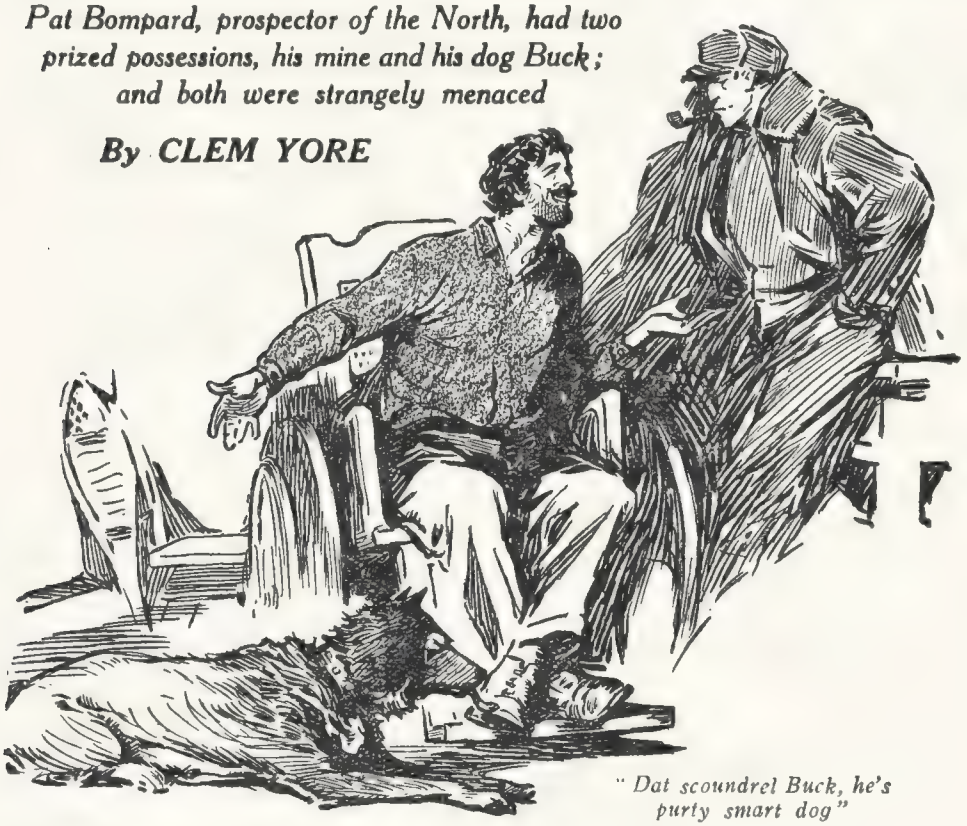
Owners of coconut trees so dread these crabs that they frequently make them commit suicide. On observing crabs at the top of a coconut or other fruit tree, natives climb halfway up and wind the trunk with coarse *cogon* grass. When the crab descends backward the grass fibers enter his only vulnerable spot, the jointed spaces in his belly armor. Then the marauder frantic with pain releases his grip in order to claw at the tormentor. Down he crashes, to crack his shell after the manner of the coconut, and so he reaches the stew pots of his clever enemies. Some of these crabs measure eight inches across the back.

C. A. Freeman.

Little Nort' Countree Voices

Pat Bompard, prospector of the North, had two prized possessions, his mine and his dog Buck; and both were strangely menaced

By CLEM YORE



" Dat scoundrel Buck, he's purty smart dog"

PAT BOMPARD! A giant, good-natured Frenchman of the North Country. I met him first through Al Turpin.

Turpin afterward made a fortune in British Columbia lumber; but as a gold stampeder, he had become a North-beaten, whimpering wretch, racked with scurvy, eager to crook a toe in a trigger and end it all. Pat Bompard had come across him and sent him out of the country, paying all the bills. That was like Bompard, I learned.

I met Al Turpin on that outgoing trip; then I sought Pat Bompard. What a man! To see him was to be attracted to him. But to listen to him talk—ah, that was an event! We became great friends. And often I'd purposely get him started as we sat around a big stove in some dive of the creek country.

" Ma frien's," he would say, " she's big countree. But she ain' always been cold. A geologic doctor told me about her. She was hot lak California and all rivers run crazee, dat tam. De air was stifle hot; volcanoes was belch many ashes, over hondred mile or so. And de gold jus' pack them high rivers chock-full. You see de point? Pat Bompard all the tam look for old

river bed, high up. Old abandon' river bed, *hein?*"

HE had made two small strikes; then he hit it.

I was a thousand miles away when I heard of Pat's great strike, and I came mushing down as if I were carrying the mail. I saw the town built, almost in a week; and—it struck me as odd—I saw a bank. Fancy a bank at the start of a new gold camp!

Pat showed me his mine, the Glory Hole. And I saw he had kept by him his old lead dog, Buck, who had been with him for four or five years. How Pat enthused over his mine as he showed it to me!

But when he talked of that bank!

"Ev'ry bank," he said, "is a one-man game. Hank Tivetts is de bank in dese place. And dat Hank is after my mine. Little nort' countree voices tal Pat Bompard dat Hank Tivetts ain' going for to get his Glory Hole."

"What do you mean, little voices?" I asked.

Then he explained. He believed that all emotion expressed itself in some mysterious manner. Dogs know by 'scent when hunger, fear, love and hate are filling the minds of animals and men. Pat devoutly believed that a scent, exudation or emanation created an aura about a man when any of these emotive states had possession of his mind; and that by the supersensitive nostrils and natures of all dogs—and of some men—these mental changes were readily understood. He called his hunches "little voices," and he obeyed them like some religion.

Pat Bompard had sunk a shaft down to his main deposit and was getting ready to "drift" so that he could take out his mineral and drop it down by gravity to the mill as soon as he had constructed one. He had just finished driving two laterals when word came that the north tunnel had bumped into water and was flooding him out.

I went to see Pat.

"Dat nort' drift strike de seepage of Glacier River. I need plenty money to buy pump outfit. Hank Tivetts got dat money; but, by gar, he want wolf share of my Glory Hole! I find way around dat, purty queeck. To-morrow I go wid my dog Buck into hills. Mebbe I can trade dat old sourdough Ike Smith for hees claim what run between Glory Hole and dat davil Glacier River. I make Ike plentee wealthy when my mine she hit her gait."

Into the hills he went the next day, to learn that Hank Tivetts, the banker, had preceded him, and had already purchased the Ike Smith ground. Pat was dejected. Ike Smith had told him that the north tunnel Pat had driven could, by a quick shove, be made to open into an old cave on Smith's land and thus divert that seepage water down hill and back into the river.

"Where is dat cave?" Pat had asked Ike.

"Not thirty feet from where you stopped work. I heard your shots, and once caught the tap, tap of your double-jacking crew. I wonder if Hank had something dirty in his brain when he bought me out?"

Pat told me about this interview, and as he spoke his brows wrinkled and a glitter came into his great eyes; but when he told me good night, he said, "You remember how I tal you about dem little voices? Well, some-t'ing very ugly—moch lak davil's work—is coming lak de wind to Pat Bompard. Somet'ing bad is come queeck! Bimeby you see!"

The next day a big spruce fell on him, pinning him down. He lay there

for nine hours before he was found and brought back to camp. I went to see him, but he had not regained consciousness; so I contented myself with a talk with the camp physician.

"He'll get well," said the doctor, "but he'll be a cripple for life, unable to walk. At least, that's my present opinion."

"Why, man, who will take care of him?"

"I've written Al Turpin, for I knew Al, with all his money, might be able to help Pat. I hope to get Pat so that he can use his arms, and maybe get around in a wheel chair. You see that spruce cracked something in his spine. Not a bone, but it pinched off a wire to his nervous center and his motor system has gone dead. Don't go to see him. The shock will appall you."

WEEKS passed. When Pat was able to sit up I went to see him. He was smiling.

"What I tol' you?" he grinned, as I entered. "Dem little voices don' lie, no? Now, listen, ma frien'. Pat Bompard is goin' get well. Just lak dat!" He snapped a finger.

"The doctor thinks so, too," I lied.

"He don' know; but Pat Bompard does. Dem little voices tal him dat one minute, some tam, I goin' be cripple, and de next second I goin' be able to yump and run round lak a husky pup. By gar, here's fine t'ing! You know ma dog Buck?"

I nodded. He went on.

"Dat husky and me we have plenty bad luck, lots of tam. But Buck he know Pat Bompard is hees frien'. Dogs know dem t'ings, right off. *bam!* lak dat. Yestiddy I call Buck. I tal heem fetch me ma beeg black satchel. Well, what you t'ink? He pick heem op and bring heem to me. Den I tal dat dog, 'tak dat satchel down to store.' I write note, stick in satchel, and Buck, he run off.

"Back he come, bringing ma mail and t'ings I want. I say, 'Buck, you ol' rascal, you t'ink you're fine faller, *hein?*' I wish you could see hees eyes! Dat's all a dog want from a man. One pat on hees back wid de man's mouth! Ha, ha! I got plenty frien' in dat dog. He goin' be my errand boy. And what you t'ink? Dat faller I help get out of dat lousy Black River countree, dat Al Turpin, he write me long letter, and, by gar, he sorry Pat Bompard is in soch a fix. He got plenty money, now, and he say when I wants somet'ing for me to send him one big holler, queeck. Mebbe I don' haf to make dat holler. I don' lak for be cripple. I don' lak to cause nobody trouble. Buck and me we get along purty well. How you lak dese wheel chair? I get round all right. Get my hands on somet'ing, *pouf!* I pull maself op, lak she bear at bee tree."

All winter the allegiance of Buck to his master was a loveliness over that entire camp. Swinging along, with that enormous satchel in his mouth, Buck could be seen daily, attending to the shopping needs of Pat Bompard. Frequently Pat would just sit in his chair at his door shooting at rabbits, and when he killed one Buck would retrieve it. Everybody knew this.

Spring came at last, and the camp settled down to big business mining.

This region of low-grade ore became nothing but a manufacturing proposition. So many tons, run through a mill, brought forth so much pay. Every one wondered why something wasn't done with Pat's Glory Hole. It was said that Hank Tivetts was fuming because he could not obtain Bompard's interest in the mine.

Then Hank called on Pat; but Pat sent him away.

Buck followed the banker down the hill, his roach sticking up on his back like a scrubbing brush. Tivetts told somebody that he was actually alarmed at the menacing attitude that dog had assumed toward him. Buck had trailed him all the way to his home.

The next day water was pouring into Pat's mine through his north drift, and that night it overflowed the main shaft and tumbled in long cascades down the side of the hill. When the moon came up I went to see Bompard.

"By golly!" he said, staring at the spot where the moon was playing on the falling cascades. "Dat's water, eh? Ain't dat Glory Hole full of water?"

I told him as gently as I could what had happened.

I heard his teeth gritting, saw his huge fingers grip the sides of his wheel chair until his knuckles showed like white knobs. Buck had his eyes fixed on his master's face.

"Hank Tivetts done dat!" Pat snapped. Then for a long time he sat silently staring, listening to the soft purr of that water's fall across the gulch. Heaving a vast sigh, he began to talk.

"I reckon Pat Bompard's tam is come for to make dat holler to Al Turpin. You see, little voices don' lie, dese tam. Now I write for money to drive beeg tunnel from de bottom of dese gulch to my main shaft, and Hank Tivetts can tak de round trip to de *château* of M'sieu de Davil."

"Why, that tunnel would drain your Glory Hole, at that!" I said.

"You lak for do dese work for Pat Bompard?"

"You bet! And I'll fly at it to-morrow. I've got a little money, and the boys will work cheap for you when they know that you're fighting this way."

I WENT to work the next day, and kept at it until Al Turpin's money came. Then, with plenty of capital, I hit a fast clip. I wasn't into the soft stuff more than seventy-five feet before we'd bumped into a mass of low-grade which proved to me that, at depths, the Glory Hole was going to be a world-beater.

I conveyed the news to Pat, and his eyes sparkled like a boy's. The way his mind filled with delight set Buck to licking his hand and playing around him, in loud barks, like a nine-months pup. Then I saw the miracle.

One of Pat's paralyzed legs lifted slowly across the other.

"Pat! You moved a foot!" I cried.

"By gar! Dat's right!" he said, staring at his shoes. "How come dat? Pat Bompard didn't know he go for move de foot. Mebbe she's goin' come round all right, *hein?*"

Buck licked the heavy shoe that had slipped across its mate.

"See dat ol' frozen fish eater!" chirped Pat. "He see what you see, my frien'! Dat Buck, dat ol' scoundrel, he's purty smart dog, dat faller."

I left Pat in a jovial mood. On the way to town I ran across the doctor, and told him of the way Pat had moved one of his legs.

"In some of these suspended movement cases," explained the physician, "cures are effected in what appears to be a miraculous manner. As a matter of fact, nature takes her time, and when adjustment is made, something clicks and there you are, reëstablishment of the correct functioning. But as a betting proposition the odds are

against Pat." Then, as if thinking aloud, he added: "A mighty shock—a mental cataclysm, as it were—sometimes restores normal action in these cases. Al Turpin has written me that he wants Pat taken to New York to see the best expert North America has. Now that involuntary leg action might mean something to the right surgeon. But here's something: I'm afraid Pat is getting into trouble."

I was all ears. "What do you mean?"

"You know how Pat has been shooting rabbits from his window, across and down his gulch?"

"Yes."

"Well, Hank Tivetts says that Pat has been shooting at him. Pat's gun is a 38-55, and Hank has dug a bullet of that caliber out of a porch post of his home. It's a good four hundred yards from Pat's window to that post. Hank says a bullet smacked that post right ahead of him, two days ago, as he came on his steps. Do you think Pat could hit a walking man, that far away?"

"He's a crack shot. But he wouldn't try to murder a man!"

"Pat's gun is the only one in camp of that 38-55 caliber. The sheriff has been examining every known gun, and the stores in town all say that Pat is the only man who ever bought that ammunition. Tivetts declares he will swear out a warrant. I'm on my way to break the news to Pat."

"I'm going with you," I said, strange fear gripping me.

When we told the cripple of Tivetts's latest move, Pat said: "Boys, eight rabbits is all Pat Bompard is shoot from dese window. Reach up for dat ca'tridge box."

I handed him the shell container.

"In dese box," he said, before opening it, "dere should be forty-two shell. Now we count dem."

His pudgy fingers flew across the rows of shells; then he lifted a face from which the blood had suddenly drained. A horrible suggestion filled my mind as he said hollowly: "Only forty-one shell. Dat's fonny!"

"What is it, Pat?" asked the doctor.

"Forty-one shell is all dat's left in de box. Now dat's queer." His voice lifted to a screech. "Do you boys t'ink dat Pat Bompard, de cock-grouse of all de Yukon countree, would go for shoot at a man lak he keel de bull moose in de swamp?"

"No, I don't," I replied. "And right now I'm going down to have a look at the bullet hole in Tivetts's porch post."

The doctor went with me; but our search proved nothing. A chisel had gouged out the bullet, leaving no trace of the passage it had made in the heavy northern spruce post. But the next day a warrant was served, though no arrest was made. Pat was allowed to remain as he was until he could be taken to trial by a long voyage down the river.

He became taciturn; wouldn't eat, except the most tempting of dainties. Buck was to be seen, these days, making many trips to and from camp with the black satchel swinging from his huge jaws.

ABOUT this time I ran into blue flint granite in the tunnel; and I had to tell Pat of the slow progress we were making.

"Dat's all right," he answered. "We go slow, now, mebbe; but every-t'ing goin' come out fine. De little voices tal me dat somet'ing happen purty queeck."

Then a curious light became visible in his eyes. "Hank Tivetts, after what he done to me, was op to see me last night. He wants to stop dat trial, and says he will give us plenty money to do all de work de Glory Hole needs if I give him half interest."

"What did you say?"

"I'm in bed when he come. When he say dat to me, I point to the door and tal him to get out. He is carrying shotgun to keep off my dog. He leave my room, go into kitchen, close de door. Good t'ing he do dat, for Buck is watch' him all de tam. Buck would kill dat faller, and Tivetts know it. After Tivetts go away de little voice whisper in my head, 'Pat Bompard, you goin' haf plenty good luck, bimeby.'"

I thought he was a bit touched, at the time, and changed the subject. When I went home I doubted that Hank Tivetts had been fool enough to have visited Pat after having had him arrested. And somehow I had an ugly prompting that Bompard, in his mental derangement, might actually have tried to murder the banker. In the morning I walked by Pat's cabin on my way to work. I found him greatly excited.

"Somet'ing is gone wrong wid dat Buck of mine," he said. "I don' know what she is, dat t'ing, but Buck is lak crazy wolf dese morning. He make fonny noise in de t'roat, run around, sniff de floor, look from de window; and I t'ink he smells every place where Hank Tivetts is walk in de kitchen. When I open de outside door Buck run off, hees nose to de dirt, and I see heem head for Tivetts's house. He is not come back. Mebbe he's goin' for to pull Hank Tivetts down. Mebbe de little voices of de nort' countree is tal heem somet'ing. I don' lak for heem to go after Tivetts. Dat ain't so good. Somebody might t'ink I sic him onto dat faller."

Leaving Pat, I studied about what he had said all day; and returning to see him that night, I stayed until nearly ten. On my way home I made up my mind to try to find the dog, for I thought it a cruelty to have Pat worrying about Buck; and frankly, I was fearful for Tivetts's safety. I seemed to feel evil in the air.

As I was passing down a back street I saw the deputy sheriff, stationed in that town, walking toward me with Tivetts. They hadn't caught sight of me. Then behind them I saw a blur of movement. A dog! I knew the shape immediately. Buck it was, and he was stalking along like a wolf, taking advantage of every shadow as he trailed the two men. I jumped a fence, concealing myself back of a bush. The men approached, stopped opposite me.

"What time is it?" muttered the deputy.

"Ten thirty, when I met you," replied Tivetts. "You go on and I'll go home. Eleven forty is the time I've set. Let's adjust our watches." A match flared, and by its light I saw the men's faces bending over their timepieces. Under the trees Buck appeared like some ghastly statue of a dog.

"You sure you know how to set that switch?" asked the deputy.

"Yes. And I'll set the clock according to my watch," answered Tivetts.

A chill paralysis gripped me. My mind numbed. Clock? Switch?

Tivetts's voice jerked my racing mind back from that shocking suggestion.

"Ten o'clock was when I walked onto my porch. Get that," he whispered the words in a rasping murmur.

"Uh-huh," answered the deputy.

"All right, now I'll leave you," blurted the banker.

MY spine was crawling with the swarming diabolisms that festered in my mind. I seemed to be cursed with the awful realization of what Tivetts was about to do. I even sensed why Buck, that wonderful dog, was absent from Pat Bompard's home.

I didn't see the deputy part from the banker; for Buck had caught my scent and was coming toward my covert. I watched him approach, gingerly stepping to the fence, and lowering his muzzle to get a better smell of me. Then his tail wagged, I'll take my oath to that; for I saw him by a faint background of light which sprayed the scene from a reflection of the main street. He moved away, hurriedly, and I arose and ran pell-mell for the saloons which I knew to be open.

As I darted up to the White Front Bar the deputy had his hand on its door. We went in together.

"Just the man I want," he said.

He must have suspected something from the look he saw flick over my face; for he seemed to wilt when I asked him wickedly what he wanted of me.

"Pat Bompard has just sent another of those 38-55's at Hank Tivetts," he replied. "I've got to put a guard around Pat's place."

Drink-dulled denizens of that saloon swung around and stared at him. A scraping of feet and a mighty gasp coming from those men told of the effect the deputy's announcement had made in that room.

"What time was that shot fired?" I asked wickedly.

"Ten o'clock, Hank said," replied the deputy.

"It could not have been," I answered. "I was with Pat at that hour. You're following a wrong lead. Somebody else is trying to kill Tivetts."

The deputy sneered; but his cold eyes worked in such a way that I knew I had disturbed his mind. I continued to talk, for I did not like the fury I saw flaming in the eyes of the men about that bar.

"If a bullet, a 38-55 bullet, is found in the front of Tivetts's home, he put it there himself; and he stole that shell from Pat's cabin. Tivetts went up to see Pat last night, and after he had tried to get Pat to agree to deeding him half of the Glory Hole, he walked out of the bedroom and closed the kitchen door after him. It was then that he stole one of Pat's shells, just as he stole that first cartridge."

"And are there men in this room who will believe that of a banker like Hank Tivetts?" asked the deputy. "No, come again, old man. Try something better than that. You see, nobody wants to hurt Pat. He's a nut. That spruce made him crazy; but we've got to confine him, and this time it means I got to handle him so that he won't hurt nobody in the future."

"Wait!" I yelled. "Doc and I counted the 38-55's in Pat's house. There were forty-one at that time. If you are on the square why not go back to Pat's and see how many shells are there now, and what condition Pat's gun is in? Are you willing?"

"Right!" said the deputy. "Let's go!"

Seven of us hurried to Bompard's, and each of us watched the deputy as he counted the ammunition. There were but forty shells! The gun, however, was clean and odorless.

"Dat davil Tivetts!" yelled Pat Bompard. "Now I see it! Tivetts stole dat ca'tridge after he close de

door on me and ma Buck, last night! I haven't shoot ma gun for weeks!"

The deputy sneered, picked up the gun and shells, and said in a tone intended to placate Pat.

"That's all right, old sourdough. You missed him. And now I'll take these so that you won't get into any more trouble. Come on, men, let's get down to Tivetts's and I'll have him show you where the bullet hit . . . Are you coming?" he concluded.

"I'll join you later," I said. "I want to talk with Pat."

THE deputy and his companions moved from the cabin. When they were beyond earshot I said to Bompard: "I saw Buck down town a moment or so ago."

"Where was he?"

"Following this deputy and Tivetts." Then I told him of crouching down back of the bush, of seeing and hearing the two men, of Buck's discovery of me.

And all the while Pat's eyes were riveted upon a corner of the room. When I finished he stared at me coldly.

"Now I know what send Buck off crazy lak," he said, all the life gone from his mellow voice. "Dat beeg, black satchel of mine is gone! Gone, do you hear me? Gone!"

"Buck didn't have it when I saw him," I replied; then I jumped for the door and went careening down the hill after the hurrying huddle of men. I stubbed my toe and fell, knocking the wind out of me, so that for seconds I couldn't move a foot. But my mind was active and vibrating with a full consciousness of what Pat Bompard meant when he spoke of "little voices." I was filled with suggestions of a vast and impending ugliness, a hideous portent of disaster.

Of a sudden my heart ceased to pound, and my lungs filled. I arose and ran down the hill. Even as I reached the bottom I realized that I was too late. Already the deputy and his companions were before Tivetts's house; and as I hurried up, and was about to shout my fears, I heard a beastly, abysmal cry of human fear.

"You fellows run! Run!" It was Tivetts's voice, and it came from around the corner of his house. "Scatter, all of you! If you don't—"

Then he appeared, and to my dying day I shall not forget the agony and terror I saw racking his face and popping out of his wicked eyes.

I felt in that cry something which seemed to drive home to me the consciousness that my fears had been authentic.

"This way, fellows!" I cried, darting around the opposite side of the house. "Follow me!"

They obeyed, and when I was some distance up the hill from the house, say about a hundred feet, I stopped and stared back.

There, bursting into the light-swath cast by Tivetts's sitting room lamp, I saw the deputy running furiously (why he had waited I couldn't guess), and fifteen feet behind him raced Hank Tivetts. Both were heading straight away from the house—as it chanced, straight toward Pat's. Then another form came into the vision. Buck! And in his mouth was that black satchel of Pat Bompard, swinging sidewise. I knew the infernal thing was heavily loaded, for I saw how difficult it was for Buck to keep it from striking the earth as he ran along the path which led to his master's cabin. But surely he was keeping it clear of the ground.

Then it happened.

There was a roar, a flash, a shock which sent me and my companions to the earth. The detonation rocked the high hills and came back in ringing echoes. I remember seeing Tivetts's body hurtling head over heels down a dry creek's bank. Of Buck I saw nothing; but I knew surely what had happened.

THE men about me picked themselves up and we hurried to render what aid we could. Only the deputy was visible when we approached the vicinity of that explosion. By some quirk of the dynamite—giant powder is always tricky—he was still alive. We carried him to the doctor, and there he revived.

He caught my eyes and gave a tortured little smile.

"I saw that you were wise," he said. "What put you hep?"

"I was back of a fence when you and Tivetts compared your watches," I said. "And when you spoke of the clock and the switch, I was sure you planned to set off a time blast. I knew Buck had been out of Pat's cabin all day, and when I learned that the black satchel was gone, I guessed that Tivetts had stolen it, and intended to use it to throw blame on Pat for some outrage."

"If you had spoken," said the deputy, "I might not have tried to go through with it. Tivetts wanted to make it appear that Pat had sent his dog with a satchetful of giant powder to Tivetts's home for the purpose of blowing it up. We knew the iron-bound satchel would leave some parts laying around, and we figured that this would fix the blame on Pat sure. And we had things timed to explode the satchel just outside of Tivetts's home while the men I brought with me were with Tivetts on the front porch."

"But what did you intend to gain?"

"We figured there'd be a lynching; or at least that the Dominion would have to place Pat in an institution, and would sell his Glory Hole. Tivetts wanted that mine bad."

Then I understood that strange sense of malevolence which had come to me as I lay stunned at the foot of the long hill. Tivetts was dead, literally mangled beyond recognition.

And Buck was but a memory.

After giving the deputy his attention, the physician and I hurried to Bompard's.

His great, round face was pinched and drawn. The network of muscle spasms was making of it a writhing mass of jumping ligaments and nerves. Then he yelled:

"Where is ma Buck dog?"

"Dead," I answered gently.

"I knew it!" he cried, and he stood upon his feet, took a step toward me and clutched my arm. "And Tivetts, too, *hein?*"

I nodded.

"De little voices done tol' me dat," he said, as he sank to the floor, great racking sobs shaking his huge frame.

From that hour Pat could walk.

And within a month we had drained the Glory Hole and were working its mammoth deposits.

In the center of that town to this day, on a prominent corner of the city's park, there is a large white marble shaft. On one side is a bronze plate bearing this inscription:

BUCK

A Full Blood Husky

He loved one man

THE END.

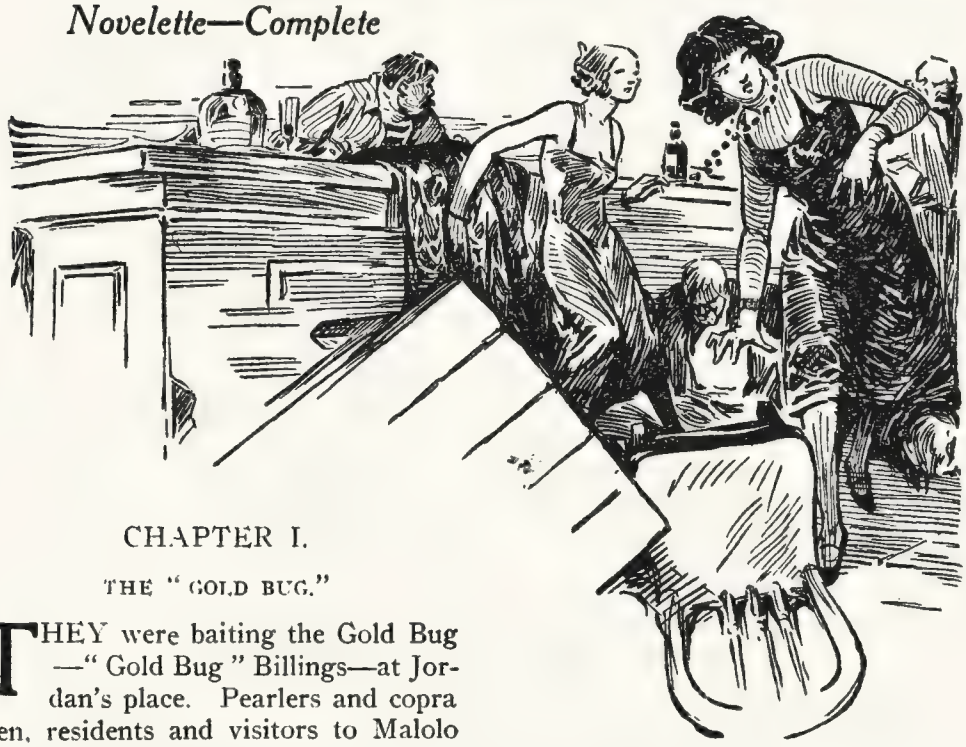
Glamour of Gold

Fighting Fallon was a big man—and he took a big man's way of raiding that cannibal tribe in the South Seas

By J. ALLAN DUNN

Author of "Aces Up!" "Beyond the Law," etc.

Novelette—Complete



CHAPTER I.

THE "GOLD BUG."

THEY were baiting the Gold Bug —"Gold Bug" Billings—at Jordan's place. Pearlers and copra men, residents and visitors to Malolo Island, native girls, a half-white or two; making fun of the Gold Bug.

The first man who called him that had possibly never heard of Poe, but the nickname was apt in more ways than one. Without question, Billings was a little cracked at times. With good reason for that. Once he had stood up to the bar and treated the outfit; Jordan had been more than friendly with him, as that bloated, hairy spider of a man always was with those who were prosperous. The prettiest of the girls had always been willing to sit on Billings's lap, to play and sing and dance for him. Now they were all giggling, laughing at him and his tormentors.

Of late years he had had all the luck of a bullfrog in a dry tank. He had owned a small schooner, had done pretty well with shell until he got his left hand caught in the shell of a *tridacna*, a giant clam. It happens sometimes to the best of divers and Billings was, of course, no match for a native. But the shell patch had been rich and he was trying to help clean up, partly for the reason that his schooner had no right within the lagoon.

He would have drowned but for his

His next big calamity was white man's leprosy. A case of too many violet sunrays on an abnormally sensitive skin. Billings never did tan properly.

He gave a yell that had been an Irish war-cry since the days of Brian Boru

native mate. He was drowning, in fact, when the man did the only thing possible, cut off Billings's hand at the wrist.

The great clam got the hand, the blood brought up sharks; but his men got Billings to the boat and did some crude surgery.

He wore a wooden hand after that, largely from conceit. It was a very obvious thing, originally covered with a glove, renewed until the Gold Bug's luck got too bad even for that. Now the kid was split at the tips and edges, gray with age and use.

The leprosy left him, but left him broke and bald as an egg, while the medicine given him by a man who was a good skipper, but a rotten doctor, had so much calomel in it that Billings got salivated and his teeth fell out.

It was not all conceit that made him buy a wig. Without it he was simply ridiculous. He needed false teeth to eat with.

He got his right foot caught in a coil of hawser rope on a dirty knife with a perilous mooring. This time his own knife saved him. He cut the hawser

just before it dragged him to the rail. He saved the foot, though he would always limp on it, but that night he lost his schooner. He was literally flung on the beach. He had been there ever since. Occasional jobs failed him. He was considered a Jonah; no wonder he was "bugs."

AS for the "Gold" part of it, that tied up with his general lunacy. It was a tale he told of an image of solid gold, a *tiki* crudely carved by a cannibal tribe living in the wild bush of an island of the Solomon group.

Every one knew there was gold in the Solomons, but no white man ever went up into the bush and came out alive

The image was too heavy to lift, Billings said. It was a tribal fetish, sacred and *tabu,* but it comprised twenty, thirty, maybe forty thousand dollars' worth of virgin gold. He had been held captive, made assistant to the wizard, had escaped. The golden god was there if any one could solve the problem of getting it. He did not suggest a solution himself.

That was a crazy tale. Billings told it everywhere, and it seemed to acquire embellishments with every repetition. Strangers were brought to hear it. It furnished Billings with many a drink and sometimes a meal. Then it got through to his semi-muddled brain that they were laughing at him, that they thought he was a colossal liar, and he got surly.

Nowadays he had to be drunk to spin the yarn. This evening he was not quite drunk enough, still resentful of the jeering men, coaxing him to amuse them, of the giggling girls, of big, fat Jordan back of the bar in singlet and white ducks, his arms thick with red fur, a thatch of it above his low forehead, falling almost into his eyes, that were the color of waves that carry sand in their half-translucent crests.

The Gold Bug hated Jordan, but he feared him. Jordan was lord and master of Malolo, so Billings had to cater to him. He was a beach bum and Jordan owned the beach.

The Gold Bug was not to be the hero of this adventure. There was nothing of the hero left about him, he was only a pitiful, broken-down shard of a man, now sane, now maudlin, the butt of a South Seas crowd of hard-bitten traders and adventurers.

There were blackbirders among them, pearl-poachers, *bêche-de-mer* and turtle-shell men, men who sold shark-fins and edible birds'-nests to the Chinese trade, and were not over-scrupulous where they got their cargoes. Free traders, independents. Jordan staked many of them, owned some of their schooners.

It is not a mistake to pick Jordan for a proper villain. His methods were spider methods, the spinning of webs, the use of craft and cunning. He catered to men's vices and weaknesses; he took advantage of their good nature and their honesty, when they possessed any. He was panderer rather than plunderer; a big man, but soft, more cruel than courageous, a bully when he had the upper hand.

Malolo was hsi, and it was no Eden. It was a place where men outfitted and spent their leisure time ashore as men of their sort do.

ONE bearded copra trader acted as showman in Jordan's that night, anxious to have his new mate and partner hear the yarn of the Gold Bug.

"Go on," he urged. "You was all ready to be made long-pig of, the oven was waitin' for you and then you hauls off your wig, you hands them your teeth and takes off your hand—and petrifies 'em. Go on, show us how you did it, you blighter, an' then tell us about the wizard an' the gold image."

Billings glowered at them. He had just enough aboard to give him Dutch courage, to bolster his grievances.

"You can bloomin' well all go to 'ell an' frizzle," he said. "You're a lot of blinkin' sea lice. You don't know when a bloke is tellin' the truth or not. A bunch of scupperjacks!"

They roared at him. The copra man advanced, a drink in one hand, his other on the Gold Bug's shoulder.

"Take this. Wet your whistle an' spill the yarn."

Billings shook him off, though his eyes gleamed at sight of the liquor. That was his only friend. Whisky or gin—brandy when he could get it; if not, *kawa*, orange-swipes, native *okolehao*, anything fermented or distilled.

His retort this time was unprintable. The copra man thrust the glass on him and then clutched at his frowzy wig. Yells of laughter went out, echoed.

The Gold Bug looked about at the grinning faces, the flashing teeth and rolling eyes, reflected in the long mirror back of the bar where Jordan was wiping tears of mirth from his dishwatery eyes.

He saw himself, bald, ridiculous; and he flung the glass of precious liquor full in the copra man's face, clawing for his wig, kicking at the other's shins, snarling, crazy, impotent.

The copra man smashed him in the face with his open hand. It sent him staggering, spinning. They tossed his wig from one to the other. They kept Billings twirling like a teetotum, his false teeth dislodged by the blow, one hand of immobile wood, the other striving to get back his hair. The girls stood up on chairs to see better the game of a beach comber's baiting.

The Gold Bug was a cripple; he had no looks, no luck. They were as cruel toward him as a shoal of fish toward an injured one.

"*Eyah, pupulc oc!*" they shouted. "Look at the crazy fool!"

Giddy and frenzied, Billings caught momentary fixed sight of his main torturer. He sprang at him like a wounded wild cat and got slugged down for his pains after the nails of his only hand had scored the copra man's face.

Billings was inches the shorter, fifty pounds lighter, infinitely weaker. He did the best he could and went to the floor with his nose smashed, blood pouring from it and his pulped lips. The other man, with a roar of rage at his scratches, kicked him, viciously, kicked him again.

Nobody interfered. Sooner or later, every beach bum got beaten up. The Gold Bug, with his bald head, his helpless hand, his broken teeth, aroused no pity. He was hideous and repulsive to them. Then Larry Fallon, Fallon of the Water Witch, came in.

CHAPTER II.

THE AVENGING FURY.

NOT many men cared to come through the reef at Malolo after dark, even when the tide was right. Jordan had a red lantern hung in a coco-palm that could be lined up with the lights of the store at one turn of the zigzag channel, the two held open at another, but there were places where they could not be seen at all,

shut off by trees. The coral barrier was a third of a mile wide and the passage was none too deep.

If you had an auxiliary engine it was better going, but few owned one. Gasoline was not plentiful; it was expensive, and most of the men who came to Malolo preferred the sail they had originally learned.

Ordinarily, the entrance of the Water Witch would have been noticed. The sound of her mooring surely would have been heard, though it was a moonless night and she slid into the lagoon like a shadow, fore down, mainsail peaked. But the natives were crowding round the door at Jordan's, where white men monopolized the privileges of entry. They did not see the landing of Fallon's shore-boat, nor him, until he hauled them to one side and entered.

Larry Fallon was a tall man, a broad man, an altogether Big Man. That was his name in native dialects, from Ambrym to Papeete. Black Irish, he was. There had been Spanish blood in the O'Fallons ever since a remnant of the Armada drifted ashore on the southeast coast of Erin and was given refuge.

His hair was black, his eyes were sloe black, his skin was always olive. South Pacific suns and seas had made him dark as a native. It had been said of him, discreetly, that you would have to look under his armpits to learn if he were white or *kanaka.*

Not that Fallon would have minded. He had a quick temper, but he could hold it. He had a sense of humor that included jokes on himself when they were not meant ill-naturedly.

He had more brawn than brains and he knew it. Anything that sheer physical manhood might cope with, he could handle.

He was not a fool, but he was not a trader. There was no merchant blood in him at all. In bargaining matters he was a child beside Jordan and his chicanery, but he had been careful not to get into Jordan's debt. He was going to stay his own master—to open his own oysters—if he had to stock the Water Witch on *taro,* dried fish and coconuts.

He was out to make his fortune, to wrest it from the world. So far, he had a schooner and a few pounds in the cabin safe. Fifty years back he would have made what he wanted easily enough, in the days of uncut sandalwood, of virgin lagoons. Farther back still he would have been a privateer, sailing under letters of marque. A great-uncle of his had run Southern cargoes under the belching muzzles of Yankee guns.

Nowadays there were too many big companies. The post-war mandates divided up all the known islands under their suzerainty and laws. Lagoons, opened at intervals by the French Colonial governments, were released too frequently. Good shell was scarce and pearls were scarcer. The soap corporations with their fast steamers collected all the copra in sight from the small native plantations. It was a hard game and small pickings.

Fallon knew it, but he did not know where else to go to better himself. The world was getting very small these days. The frontiers of sea and land were slowly vanishing. Beat up a lonely atoll and you found a man setting the latest hit on a phonograph or tuning in a radio. It was not quite as bad as that, but bad enough.

Fallon knew the South Pacific, had been apprenticed to it, knew its ways, rough and smooth, and loved them all.

Most of the men inside Jordan's he

knew. They were all more or less casual acquaintances. Fallon liked a drink, or two, or more; but he did not like getting drunk in their company. The majority were going to seed. In the language of the schoolboy essayist "their customs were beastly and manners they had none." Fallon was clean, proud of his cleanliness and strength. He liked the girls at Jordan's even less; though, when he stopped to think of it, he was sorry for them. He held an instinctive horror of "going native" in the smallest degree.

As for Jordan? He was about to show what he thought of Jordan.

HE looked over the shoulders of the ring of bullies and saw the Gold Bug cowering on the floor, sick at his stomach from the kicks.

Fallon did not usually consider the Gold Bug. He had given him a meal or two, a drink or two, a dollar or two, with an Irishman's impulses toward a fool. Even now, certain news he had gathered on his last trip had no consideration in his mind. He would have done the same thing if Billings had been a dog.

He caught the copra man—who was a sizable and stout man also—by the collar of his shirt and jerked him back as he started another kick. The fabric tore and the man spun, cursing, striking out.

It was a reckless thing to take a punch at Fallon, who was cold sober, as usual. He took the blow on his forearm, turned the counter into a drive for the other's neck and brought up his right in an uppercut to the jaw.

"You're a lot of stinkin', cowardly swine," Fallon said. "Jordan, you're another. I always thought so. You'd let a man be murdered to hold your crowd!"

A pig is a respected possession in Polynesia and Melanesia There are tribes whose women kill their offspring and suckle a porker when food is scarce. Pigs are real property in Ireland, too; but the word applied to white men in the South Seas is not deemed polite. Lest he might be misunderstood, Fallon added other deep-sea fighting epithets that cut deep, that lashed them, challenged them.

The copra man clung to him as he went down from the punch. Fallon gathered the fellow in his arms and hurled him, big as he was, at the drunken mob that rushed him, balked of their pastime, while the girls squealed and scattered.

There were no weapons in the crowd. They had pistols aboard, rifles, belaying pins, but they did not bring these ashore. One fell and others bumped each other as the senseless hulk of the copra man crashed into them.

They were all pretty drunk. A good many of them did not like Larry Fallon. They respected him and resented having to do so.

He was notoriously honest and they were not. They were largely what he called them as he stood over Billings and picked him up, hurt, limp, moaning, filthy. He carried him to a table, swept it clear of bottles and glasses and laid the Gold Bug on it. Then he turned on them again.

HE was hot now, fighting hot. But his temper was still his own. He liked a fight. He did not often find any single opponent to give him a good one. He had no dislike for odds.

"There's not one of you with the brains of a dried sea-slug," he said. "I've a notion to treat every last one of you as you've done to this poor divvle. An' I can do it."

Boasters, the Fallons—the O'Fallons, as they were called at home—but they usually made good, or went down trying. Jordan started to come from behind the bar.

"You keep out of this, as you started in," called Fallon. "Stay back of your counter, you hairy red ape!"

His voice rose in a challenge. He towered over them. Billings's blood was all over his whites. He had felt that broken body and his manhood was in revolt. Nor did words fail him. He was eloquent

Some one flung a bottle. Another followed and the fight commenced. His own blood now flowed from Fallon's scalp. The pack rushed him, stung beyond endurance by his taunts. The first two got their heads cracked together. Then they scrabbled at him, seeking to get him down, flailing at him, one on his back, hands about his throat.

Fallon backed to the wall, dragging some of them with him, striking out right and left, with jolts, with straight-arm punches. He grabbed the man who was trying to choke him, and crashed him against the planks so that the place shook.

He jarred the other's spine so hard that the fellow let go and slumped down, winding his arms about Fallon's legs, and got a back-kick in the belly for his pains.

There was only a slight brogue to Fallon's ordinary speech. Now he relapsed into pure Celtic, a yell as old as the days of Brian Boru—older, in fact.

"Whurroo!"

He broke loose from them and seized a chair, swinging it, thrusting it at their faces, bludgeoning.

They tore it from him.

Some one jumped on a flimsy table and broke it apart. They took the legs for clubs and Fallon got one of them.

This was shillalah play. He charged them and they broke before him. He knocked a table leg from one man's hand and cracked the sconce of another.

Others had chairs, and he threw a small table at them as they came in. He whirled and cleared a space about him. His coat was sleeveless, ripped. He was smeared with his own gore and theirs.

Once he went down to one knee and they almost had him. He got up again, panting, but still strong. They panted, too, and they were winded. The booze was dying out in them.

"Whurroo! Out with ye! Outside, you scum!"

THEY went. Two bolted and others followed. Five were down on the sand which Jordan had put on his floor. They had lost all interest in the proceedings.

The girls had long since flown. The news of the fight, of Big Man cleaning up Jordan's, had spread abroad. Grinning natives gathered but kept clear, delighted as the beaten crowd poured out to the beach, no longer coherent of speech or action, bruised, wrists out of commission, one with an arm broken. They went to their own places. Big Man had won.

"You've smashed my place," said Jordan. "Who's going to pay for it?"

"That's for you to say. You'll not collect from me. If your joint is in smithereens I give you fair chance to come aboard my schooner with the same outfit. If they come armed I'll meet 'em that way. Any way you choose, you bloodsuckin' omadhaun!"

Fallon picked up the Gold Bug, silent now, and bore him in his arms

down to his waiting boat, unchecked. The natives made a path for the Big Man. They did not cheer, but they gabbled and their gibberish was high token of respect.

The boat put off to the Water Witch, its passage marked by streaks of sea fire from the measured strokes. His own men had not interfered. They would have helped in a pinch, but they knew their skipper. Picked men, all of them, some black, some brown, sea comrades of many seasons. They knew pretty well all that had happened and they clucked softly among themselves as they bent the ashen sweeps, with Fallon steering.

He set Billings down on the cushions of the main cabin, examined his hurts, and shook his head over them. Broken ribs, contusions. The Gold Bug's luck.

Then he got out his medicine chest and set to work. He was a better hand at it than the skipper who had doctored Billings for the white man's leprosy. He gave the patient a hypodermic and stowed him in a bunk.

"They damn' nigh killed him," said the mate, Tim Riley. "You look like you'd been in a scrap yourself, mister."

Fallon stretched himself, not without aches.

"'Twas quite a scrap," he said. "The pity of it is that that land crab Jordan wasn't in it. I'd likely have killed the flabby *keko* if he had come in. He's made a butt of the Gold Bug long enough. You'd better take a couple of stitches in my scalp, Tim, but don't think it's canvas you're stitchin'. Use lots of iodine. We're leavin' Malolo on the ebb, soon as it's strong enough. I've a notion that fight may have been worth while, after all."

He had remembered what he had heard lately. It had to do with the Gold Bug, with his Sindbad's yarn.

CHAPTER III.

A CANNIBAL FEAST.

BANDAGED, recovering, the Gold Bug told his tale to sympathetic hearers for the first time in a long, long while.

"Mind you, it's the solemn truth I'm tellin'," he said. "So 'elp me."

Billings was stiff and sore. He had seen nothing of the fight, but he had heard of it from Fallon's cook-steward, half Samoan, half Chinese, who had waited on him. "Like a blinkin' prince," Billings told himself.

The Gold Bug was infinitely grateful. He himself was done. Crippled as he was, he had lost the last remnants of his nerve. Only the interest that Fallon showed in listening to his tale gave him the will to live, helped him to heal.

"They've done me in," he said. "I'm a blinkin' invalid from now on. Through!"

"You'll take it easy," said Fallon. "I've heard your yarn before, Billings. I want to hear it again. Cut out the frills. I believe it, but I want it straight. I've heard something that ties up with it. I'm goin' after that gold *tiki*, an' you'll get your whack. Enough to put you in a snug haven. Now, sail ahead."

It was a weird tale. There was slight wonder that men mocked at it. But Fallon had seen and heard of stranger things. Moreover, he had seen two blackbirds, contracted on a plantation, who were recruits from the island Billings spoke of. And they had mentioned the idol carved from yellow rock.

He knew the virtue supposed to be held in certain stones among the superstitious savages. He gathered that this stone, this mass of gold, had originally presented some semblance to an image. Doubtless a wizard had emphasized those features. That it might be gold Fallon well believed. Gold—a fortune held by cannibals, who might be circumvented or coerced. Fallon knew his natives.

"I was on the Seabird," said Billings. "That was hafter I went broke. They give me a job because I could talk native. They was blackbirdin'."

Fallon nodded. He knew the recruiting trade still went on, connived at by eager planters, winked at, perhaps, by the authorities.

"We went into the lagoon at Niuti. Two boats, both painted red, to let 'em know what we was after. One coverin'. They was in the bush all right, waitin' for us. But the chief didn't show. 'Is nyme is Tomolu. They was ready enough to talk, said a dozen would take on if we give them rifles. It looked fishy to me, but the skipper was keen to make the 'ead money. 'E 'ad some old Enfie'ds with 'im. Sent the coverin' boat back for 'em, like a fool.

"We 'ad trade 'atchets in our boat, with some other truck. First thing you know a native 'oists one over the gunnel with his toes, an' brains the mate. Then they swarms out of the bush. The coverin' boat starts back, starts firin', but they got four of us, countin' the mate. Me they swiped with a club.

"NEXT thing I knew I was up at their village. Up in the bush. The skipper couldn't do a thing. They 'ad us. The mate was dead. So was one more. We was long-pig. Slung up in a basket I was, with the other bloke who was alive, a covered basket like a cage, 'ung on the bough of a banyan tree on the *sing-sing* ground with strings o' skulls all about us like onions in a grocery store.

"It was night. A big fire there an' the drum-logs boomin'. They was openin' up the ovens, all 'ot, an' glowin' like furnaces. Tykin' out what was in 'em, wrapped up in *ti*-leaves. . . . Could I 'ave a slug of somethin'? It mykes me sick to think of it."

The fever was gone. Fallon knew what the Gold Bug visioned. He gave him some gin and water.

"It was our turn next night," Billings went on. "They made fresh oven pits and filled 'em with burning wood, over the stones. They took down Walker first an' lined up, tellin' 'im to run. Where to? Them with clubs, spiked with shell. 'E was 'alf paralyzed, poor beggar, but he tried to grab a club, an' 'e goes down.

"Then me. I'm crazy, they say. Gold Bug! But I 'ad an idea. When they take me out of the cage there is the *tahunga,* the wizard, all daubed up an' rigged out—Ngaki, 'is nyme was. 'E grins at me, an' I tyke off my wig an' bows. 'E looks at my bald top, an' I see 'e's sort of staggered. So I tyke out my teeth, an' they're all jabberin'.

"Sounds like a fool thing, but it was all I could do. So I took off my wooden 'and an' offers it to Ngaki, with a bow. 'E skips back with a yell. I was skinny enough. Maybe they figgered I wouldn't be good to eat. You can't tell 'ow they figger things out. Back I go in the cage like a fowl in Leaden'all Market. Never mind what they did to Walker."

He finished his tumbler of diluted Hollands.

"I got a charnce to talk. You can bet I talked—right! I told 'em I was a wizard, that I wasn't 'uman. I arsked

'em if they wanted me to tyke orf my legs. I was daffy, I suppose, but it worked. Ngaki tykes me under 'is wing, thet old vulture! What really saved me was my birthmark. They'd stripped me to the buff, but they 'adn't noticed it. Too 'ungry. But Ngaki twigs it. It's on my chest. Looks like a turtle. An' Ngaki claimed to have a great-great-grandfather that was a turtle. You know 'ow that is?"

"I know," said Fallon. "Go ahead. I believe you, Billings."

"I wouldn't lie to you, arfter what you've done."

BILLINGS'S illness seemed to have purged him of his muddlement. He was weak, but no longer the Gold Bug. He was telling a straight tale.

"That let me in. I could talk their lingo, an' I knew a few tricks I showed Ngaki. I was 'is assistant. 'E was an old beggar, but 'e was foxy. 'E ruled the roost, 'e did. There's another island about seven miles off that's in'abited by some of their own crowd, arfter a split-up. The chief's a 'arf brother to Tomolu. Once in a while they made raids on Niuti, for 'eads an' women. We sighted 'em one day, makin' for us. A squall come up, an' I spotted it. Ngaki tykes the credit when they was swamped, an' put back, but 'e treats me better.

"They've got a temple on the edge of a cliff. A big, damp grass 'ouse that stinks. *Tikis* stuck up all about it. Ngaki tykes me there when 'e pulls 'is patter for the crowd. 'E mykes voices sound in the roof with 'is ventriloquism. There's a lot of sort of mummies standin' round. I sit in the dark an' pull strings to make 'em jump up an' down at the right minute. All sorts of fake stuff.

"This image I tell you of is in the back of that temple. It ain't much for looks. 'Ideous. But it's yeller. An' it's soft, like lead. I stick a knife into it once. 'Eavy, like lead. It's gold! Ngaki claims 'e found it just as it is, but I bet the beggar fixed it up. Stands that 'igh."

Fallon and Riley listened with taut jaws.

"All right, I'll git on. This Niuti is volcanic. There's 'ot springs an' 'ot mud bowls that myke funny noises. Ngaki lives in a cave right close by. Me with 'im. The cave is filled with all sorts of conjurer's truck. Now an' then Ngaki goes into a fake trance. 'E disappears. Comes in through the big gate. They've got an 'igh wall, coral, all round the town. It's guarded all the time, for fear of the beggars over on the other island, Ifati.

"It's magic to them, for Ngaki to do what 'e does. But I twig it. It's a lava blow'ole, back in 'is cave. Funny noises comin' out of it. Natural gas an' steam. None to 'urt. I see Ngaki sneak down it one night. 'E don't know that. But I figger it's my getaway. Not much of a charnce, but I don't want to stay there all my life, an' Ngaki's mighty old. 'E doses 'imself with 'erbs, but 'e's a sick man. When 'e goes, where do I come in?

"I don't figger on the gold image. I can't tyke that along. One night I 'ear Ngaki groanin'. This time 'e's a goner. I myke my sneak. I tyke torches an' snake down that blowout. It comes out, 'way outside the gate, right close to a banyan. I got down to the beach all right. You see, I knew which of the trails Ngaki had took. They didn't foller me.

"Of course, they found 'im dead. I 'eard the drums an' the wailin'. Maybe they thought 'is spirit 'ad taken

mine along, body an' all. They didn't spot me. Tykes 'em a week to get through a funeral. I found enough to eat. Three weeks I was on the beach before a recruiter comes. You can bet I'm lookin' for it. I see it at dawn. The natives don't get up too early.

"I can swim. That is, I could. I go out through the ebb, sharks or no sharks. An' myke it. After what I tell 'em they conclude Niuti ain't what you'd call 'orspitable an' leave it. When I tell them about the gold *tiki*, they give me the 'orse laugh. But it's there, jüst the syme." Billings lay back, exhausted.

FALLON poured out a little more liquor. He had made up his mind to get the image.

There were other things, that Billings told him later, concerning the customs of the tribe, its dialect. Slowly his plan matured. There were certain things he had to get, which Jordan did not have. Though Jordan did not bother him. The shell season was on, the rains over. Malolo would be practically deserted. Fallon set a course for Apia.

When he had decided on what he would do he consulted with Billings. The Gold Bug approved his scheme, as far as it might go. It was fraught with danger, but it held the elements of possible success.

"Don't arsk me to go up there in the bush with you," Billings begged. "My nerve is gone. It wouldn't be easy for me to explain things, if they gave me a show. Ngaki was my stand-by."

"I'll tackle it alone," said Fallon.

On the way to the port he stood naked on the deck of the Water Witch, let the sun and wind darken him. What was lacking, stain could make up. It was not in his mind to appear on Niuti as a white man. He studied the dialect from Billings, already an adept himself in the crude languages of the scattered isles.

His plan was a terrific hazard, but it was to be thrown for a worthy stake. No man unacquainted with the South Seas tribes could have attempted it. No man without his physical prowess might hope to carry it through.

There was a law on Niuti, not entirely strange to the region. A challenger who could physically conquer the reigning chieftain in single combat might take his place. Not a white man. But Fallon meant to challenge.

Tomolu was still in his prime. It should be a good fight. And, after that, the golden *tiki*.

CHAPTER IV.

THE DEATH CHALLENGE.

THE Water Witch approached the island of Niuti after dusk had fallen. Ever since Fallon sighted it he had kept low on the horizon. There was a still wind, and he was able to stay where he wanted under almost bare poles, reducing to a minimum the chances of the islanders' seeing them.

This chance was diminished still further by their keeping to the north side, at Billings's suggestion. The south side was the lee, the only side to enter the lagoon, and that could only be done in shore boats, so shallow was the passage.

Niuti was not a place of regular call. Its natives had a bad reputation, even among the savage Solomons. Only occasionally had even recruiters ventured there, and now that traffic was too hazardous under British rule to be tried in the group.

It was more than probable that no ship had visited Niuti for two or three years. The islanders would not be maintaining a watch for one.

Fallon had practically perfected his plans. He would play the hand alone. He might have persuaded Riley to go along, perhaps some of his crew, but they would only jeopardize matters, and their numbers would not mean much if there was trouble.

Fallon spent the last of the daylight in touching up his body with stain. Dark as he now was, with his beard grown, he looked savage enough.

"If your 'air was frizzier an' you 'ad your teeth filed, you'd pass for a sure-enough cannibal," said Billings. "If you live among 'em, they'll want you to eat long-pig, turn *kai-kanak*. I got out of it because they knew I was a white man. They won't know what to make of you."

"That's going to be half the battle," said Fallon. "I aim to keep them guessing from the start. You're not really fit to go ashore, Billings, but you can draw me the general plan of those bush trails. I'll take along two men to tote my dunnage up to that banyan tree outside the gate. Then they can return, and Riley will take the schooner back to Malolo. You'll need grub, and it's the nearest place, though I hate to pay out good money to Jordan.

"He won't bother you any, Billings. You can stay on board for that matter. But it's the off season, and there won't be hardly any one there outside the regulars. Riley will see Jordan leaves you alone."

"I ain't afraid of 'im," said Billings. He was still shaky, but he was getting slowly back. He would never be even as fit as he was before his beating, but Fallon had expected internal injuries that failed to materialize.

With his convalescence Billings's thirst for liquor increased. He was always trying to cadge it, to wheedle an extra drink from Fallon, Riley or the steward.

"It's all I got left, gittin' blotto," he said. "Talk as you like, booze is the key to the poor man's 'eaven. You ain't a bum when you're tight; you're as good as the next 'un, you forget all your troubles."

"Till you wake up," Fallon added. "You're drinking three times now what any of us do, Billings. You'll break down some day. Go all to bits. It 'll kill you."

"If you was me," asked Billings bitterly, "would you want to live? What the bloomin' 'ell 'ave I got to live for? I'm just a joke."

"Wait till you get your whack of the image, Billings. You can go to Papeete and live fine. Take it easy. You've had rotten luck, but gettin' pickled all the time won't mend matters."

HE could see that the lust for liquor had Billings by the throat. Sooner or later he would be found dead on the beach or go off in delirium tremens, no matter where he was. He had cast off all lines with life except liquor, the one thing which restored him to a false equality. He was hardly to be blamed, Fallon thought.

"Come back here three weeks from to-night," the skipper told Riley. "That gives you time for the double trip nicely, and gives me time to win or lose. If I last out the first twenty-four hours I'll be on the job. I shall be watching for you. And I'll have the *tiki*."

"I'll not be surprised at that," said Riley.

He believed in his skipper implicitly, and the main part of Fallon's scheme for getting hold of the golden fetish was, to Riley, a marvel of genius. Billings approved it, if it could be applied. There would be plenty of obstacles in the way. Fallon had set himself what might well be called a Herculean task.

Billings made a rough sketch of the trails cut through the thick bush that all led up from the landing place and eventually converged at the town.

"Ngaki's dead," he said. "I dunno who they got to tyke 'is plyce. Some one 'll set up as wizard, of course; it's too soft a snap to let slide. An' it 'll be 'is job to open an' close the paths. They ain't much worried about anything but those chaps from Ifati sneakin' over some dawn. Ngaki 'ad 'is own way of markin' the paths that was clear from traps, but I wouldn't stake too much on what I tell you, Fallon. They may still follow Ngaki's scheme, an' that was this:

"You'll find a skull on a bamboo pole at the beginnin' of every trail, swingin' from it by a *coir* string. There are skulls all over the blinkin' shop, anyway. These look all alike, but the skull with the short string should be the open trail. . . . I'll go that far with you, for a couple of shots of straight 'ooch."

He was incorrigible. Fallon had cautioned Riley to keep him on short rations until the affair was over. But if Billings mustered up enough of his shattered nerve to set foot on Niuti, he deserved those drinks.

"I'LL go in the boat with you," Billings went on. "I want to tyke you round to the foot of that 'igh cliff. It falls sheer into the water, an' you couldn't ever climb it, up or down. All lava, and no vines on it. It protects the town on one side, though it's built a way back from the edge. But the temple is right on the rim.

"You get 'old of that *tiki* an' you can lower it right down into the boat when we come back. Slick as pig's grease. I thought of that long ago, but I couldn't pull it off. I 'ad no boat. I couldn't budge that *tiki* myself. You'll 'ave all you can do to 'andle it, Fallon. Besides, all I thought of was gettin' away. But you can do it, if things work right the way you've laid 'em out. I wish I 'ad nerve enough to go in with you an' 'elp you. But they'd spot me an' they might think I'd killed Ngaki. Then we'd both be cooked. You'll myke it, Fallon, you see if you don't."

Billings seemed confident enough, and he knew some, at least, of the conditions surrounding the taking of a sacred golden image out of the heart of a cannibal capital, single-handed. The gold had no value to the natives, but the image was a holy and a *tabu* thing.

It would not be easy for any but the wizard priest to get near it. Perhaps the chief could, too.

Riley was grave as he accepted his final instructions before they disembarked after nightfall. Night was the propitious, necessary time. Natives might feast and dance late after dark, but they would not leave their town inclosure; they stayed on the *sing-sing* ground, with great drum-logs booming to keep off the evil spirits that haunted the dark.

They would not even fear a night raid from their bloodthirsty, woman-seeking, head-hunting cousins on Ifati, though the main gate would always be guarded by spearmen, on a stabbing

platform above it, night and day. That was old custom. But none save a madman would venture on the bush trails.

Fallon, knowing native superstition, had worked out the manner of his arrival. A surprise, made easy by Billings's lava blowout tunnel. It must be an entrance dramatic and smacking of the supernatural. Then, by ancient law, would come the right of challenge.

Fallon was not worrying about that. But even as acknowledged chief he would have the enmity of the conquered man, unless he killed him, and the skipper was not prepared to do deliberate murder even for this prize, this modern Jason's Golden Fleece. There would be the wizard to cajole or conquer, a score of things that would take time, all of the three weeks, perhaps more.

BUT he welcomed it all, the sheer marvelous adventure of it. It was the way he wanted things. To go in single-handed, win or lose. And this was his first big chance—would probably be his last.

He laughed and joked until the last minute when they left the Water Witch, sailing like a ghost ship up and down the reef where the breakers were laced with phosphorus, showing flares of blue and green flame as they broke on the coral. They slid through the reef gate between the crashing combers and rowed first to the sheer cliff over which lava had cascaded to the sea.

Billings, primed by those two drinks he had begged, pointed out the roof of the *heiau,* or temple—conical, grass-thatched, close to the edge. In it stood the image of solid gold, unless, after all, Billings had lied, or woven it out of his half-crazed brain.

But Fallon, more than ever, credited the tale as he listened to Billings's whisper, gazed at the heathen shrine.

He was on the threshold of high adventure now. He had no firearms, only a knife. He was careful to take nothing that smacked of white man's magic, though he had some magic he meant to show them if he got the chance.

A gun would be little good. It would not stampede them. They knew guns. He might kill one or two, but if it came to fighting they would soon have him down. The knife was a *bolo,* sufficiently savage, and yet strange, to fit his rôle.

They grated softly on the beach. Billings was almost whimpering with excitement.

"'Ere it is," he said. "Right 'ere. See them things like rabbit 'utches all along by the bush? They're full of skulls. They all collect skulls like a kid collects marbles. Shows 'ow strong they are, what? Now, then, the middle trail is right 'andy."

Land crabs scuttled back and forth as they followed him, limping up to where a skull dangling from a bamboo pole marked a black, narrow opening in the bush.

The path ran upward, made for defense, its dirt trodden hard as cement, walled on either side by the impenetrable growth of great trees and vines and tangled undergrowth called the bush.

The "bush," with forest monarchs in it three hundred feet in height, with great banyans whose spreading boughs, supported by root pillars, covered half an acre.

Natives traveled along the verge of it like monkeys, guarding the paths. But not at night. They set pitfalls, strung great arrows, triggered poisoned shafts; but they themselves left

the bush alone after the sun god had gone to bed.

THE white men went from this trail to another. To five in all, and found one where the suspending string was short.

"That ought to be it," said Billings. His false teeth were chattering; he shook all over. "Who goes up with you? Tyke it easy. Watch your step. Good luck to you, Fallon—tell Riley to give me an extra drink when I get back, or I'll shake apart. Listen!"

Out of the night there came the *boom-boom* of deep drums. Fallon knew their sort, hollow logs set on their butts, slit for sound, carved in the shape of hideous faces, pounded by standing men with hardwood sticks.

Boom-boom-boom!

It filled the air and sky. It seemed to shake the ground, to stir the bush to life. Just faintly mingled with it, the sound of wild chanting, of shrill notes blown from Pan pipes. Fallon listened, interpreted it. The sound was not menacing.

"Just a *sing-sing*," he said. It suited his purpose.

"They're always at it," said Billings. "When a *kanaka* can't think of anything else to do, he starts a *sing-sing*. Well, guvnor, 'ere you go. Shyke 'ands on it, will you?"

Billings's hands were clammy with sweat. Fallon promised him his extra tot, bade the two native sailors pick up the dunnage he was taking in, shouldered his own pack, and led the way, spraying it with a flash light. It was the sole modern thing he had conceded his equipment, with spare batteries. It would be magic that would not be seen back of its dazzling ray; therefore it would be accepted as part of his *mana*, his psychological entity.

At every sharp turn Fallon went slowly and carefully. Twice he found vines that seemed to have naturally strayed across the path. He lay flat and pulled on one of the snares and instantly two shafts whizzed across the trail. Either they were not keeping to the old methods or, more likely, these few booby traps were known to all the inhabitants.

As they mounted, the drumming grew louder, pulsing through the forest, vibrating in their own diaphragms. The chant was more distinct, with now and then a high-pitched chorus from female voices. They were getting close to the town.

Fallon shut off the ray. He could see the reflection of a big fire, the lights from the torches of the warders by the gate. Before them were the pillars of a banyan, a maze of root suckers.

Fallon led his two men inside, toward the central trunk. It was split, hollow, a shell. His beam showed the interior, holding within it something like the mouth of a small shaft, the obsidian edges ragged.

It was the exit of Ngaki's hidden tunnel. The banyan was very ancient. The blowout had come after its maturity had been attained. It still flourished, no longer needing the main trunk, fed by a hundred subsidiaries, hiding its secret.

A BANYAN was a medicine tree. Its gloomy aisles suggested magic. Aside from actual laws of *tabu* natives avoided them.

Fallon wondered if Ngaki's successor knew of this tunnel. It did not much matter. It was his sesame to the golden treasure, his back-door entrance to the kingdom of Tomolu. Tomolu, whom he had to overthrow bodily as his first test of fitness and triumph.

The hollow trunk was ideal storage for his packs.

He dismissed the men. Saw them merge with the black night. For a while he listened to the drums and the yelping chants, the wild, fierce music. Then he stripped, found a tin canister in his pack, took from it the *filimi* of Samoa, giant fungi that shine with phosphorescence so that they light up the forest all about them.

They were harmless enough, but their final effect was terrific. First Fallon slightly greased himself in his impromptu dressing-room, then freely applied the half-dried fungi.

When he had finished he glowed with the light a firefly carries. He looked like a corpse that had taken on putrefaction but, by magic, still is solid, still walks and breathes.

So he eased himself into the blow-out tunnel, with little flickers of his torch, tunneling under the gate, under the very *sing-sing* ground, coming up at last in a cavern that was vacant. He saw the glow of the *sing-sing* fire in its entrance.

Masking his ray, he glanced about. The usual paraphernalia of a wizard. Strange-shaped roots, dried objects, a crocodile, a baby. Pots and calabashes and a general stink of native drugs and unclean, unsanitary ownership. Some mats, two worn blankets from some recruiting ship. Hideous masks on the wall. Fallon was almost tempted to use one of them, but forbore. His own face with its flickering green flame, the fire in his hair and beard, was enough.

The grouped, stilted houses were all dark and silent. The whole village was on the *sing-sing* ground. By the radiance of the fire Fallon picked out the sacred banyan, climbed it, progressed along its radial horizontal boughs, between strings of skulls.

He saw the crude dancers shuffling up and down while the drummers smote the logs and the huddled women stood on the sidelines.

In the center of them all capered the wizard. Fallon did not think much of him. He showed nothing original, nothing even impressive, only leaped about beneath a straw cloak and waved the long snout of a wicker mask.

He saw the chief, seated in a clumsily-carved chair. Tomolu. An immense man. He was fat, gross of chin and belly, but he was enormous.

Fallon regarded him critically. He had to get the best of Tomolu or, as Billings had remarked, he would be cooked, very literally cooked.

IT was not going to be a snap. That bulk had strength and sinew inside of it. These big, obese chieftains were mighty both as eaters and fighters.

But Fallon was committed.

Slowly he edged out on a huge bough, then slid down a root stem. The wizard finished his dance, retreated back of the drums. They took on a different rhythm. The program had reached its climax.

Suddenly the women yelled, the men shrank back. Even Tomolu recoiled in his seat.

The figure of a spirit, surely of a spirit, an *aitu,* a ghost, with green flames flickering on him, naked, superb of physique, dark of skin, long hair, heavy beard, black, flashing eyes, had appeared suddenly, materialized from the night.

It spoke to them.

"I am Big Man," it spoke in their own tongue. "Big Man! I come, come from the uttermost darkness, from the place of ghosts, back to earth; come to challenge you, O Tomolu, not in mal-

ice, but because my *mana* tells me you have ruled too long. It is time you rested."

"Big Man!"

He was all of that. Tomolu, rousing himself sluggishly, appraised him. It was a long time since he had fought. It came into his mind that this would be his last fight, unless he won. None had dared challenge him before, yet he had known it would come some time. He had expected it to come from Ifati, with a ceremonial challenge. This man was not from Ifati. He looked as if he had come from the grave. How did he get past the guards?

The wizard, Ngaki's successor, reappeared. He had not been Ngaki's pupil. He was a figurehead, not, as Ngaki had been, the actual swayer of the tribe. He stood hesitating.

Tomolu lifted himself up, heavily. He was slow, but he was strong and sturdy on his feet. He ignored the sorcerer.

"To-morrow, Big Man," he said, "I shall make you small."

CHAPTER V.

TOMOLU THE RIB-CRUSHER.

BY the old custom of the tribe, the combat was to be bare-handed, without the use of weapons. It was a practice prevailing in many islands of the southwestern Pacific, set up in wisdom. In the old days the chiefs were all supposed, like the priests, to be demigods, to have supernatural ancestors and therefore superior spirits, superior wisdom and superior strength.

Such rank was largely sustained by the fact that the chiefs naturally chose the finest women, that they were always fed from childhood on the best food; in times of famine they were the only ones who continued on full rations while others starved.

A chief must not take a commoner for wife or even concubine. The royal, heaven-mingled blood must be preserved. This worked for inbreeding. The purpose of the challenge was to bring in new blood, and surely he who could overthrow the chief was worthy of all honor. It was primitive—primitive as the downfall of a stallion, a bison, a bull elephant; nature's method of insuring vigor.

Fallon had passed the night in the wizard's cave, as his guest. The more he saw of this man, named Nyangtui, the less he considered him as even a conjurer, much less a wizard. As Billings had said, it was a soft job and some one had been bound to fill it.

Nyangtui was a fellow of low cunning, rather than of any craft. He had picked up a few tricks and got by with the easy-going and indolent Tomolu. But he did not like the advent of Big Man. That was easy to discern and Fallon did not underestimate the evil possibilities of the rascal.

He did not think that Nyangtui had ever tried the tunnel. Where it came into the back of the cavern that Nyangtui had preëmpted with his claiming of Ngaki's position, it seemed merely a fissure in the floor, even as there were similar ones in the cave walls.

And, though it had been silent in his first passage—the causes probably diminished since Billings's day—it made itself manifest after Nyangtui and Fallon went to the cave.

There were slight hissings of steam, with sulphurous smells accompanying them, now and then a sort of groan. Nyangtui affected not to notice them as he proffered Fallon mats, offered

him food. Fallon took the first, waved away the second.

He had food of his own in the banyan; he was not too keen on accepting Nyangtui's. Later on, he could make arrangements for eating. At present he would keep to his own stores and, if they thought he fasted or existed miraculously without food for awhile, so much the better.

A HEAVIER groan than ever came from the rift.

"Who lives there?" asked Fallon carelessly.

He saw the eyes of the wizard bulge. Aside from Fallon's suggestion, he had always imagined some monster lived down there. Fallon was sure he had never had the stamina to explore it.

"Perhaps it is Mauinui?" the wizard suggested. This was a god Fallon did not know, though the root name, Maui, signified a deity.

"Let us go and see," he said. Nyangtui shrank back. "Why not?" persisted Fallon. "We are wizards, you and I? But perhaps I had better sleep, since I am to set Tomolu on his back to-morrow."

He yawned, Nyangtui regarding him fearfully but malevolently. If this Big Man won he would not have so easy a time of it. He debated the matter in his shallow mind while Fallon lay down, his *bolo* handy, beside his torch.

Nyangtui rolled in at last and the skipper heard him snoring before he fell asleep himself. A violent snort from the fissure awakened him. He had meant only to take a nap, used to ship watches.

He was hungry and he slid down into the tunnel, through to the tree, feeling nothing worse than the vapor of a Turkish bath as he passed through. The snorts of gas were back of the tunnel wall. They were not harmful.

Fallon made his meal, returned. It was close to dawn, light was slowly filtering into the cave, but still dusk.

He saw the figure of Nyangtui rise from his mats, pick up something and come creeping back to where he imagined the interloper lay. Big Man or not, he meant to test his wizardry with a poison that he had inherited from Ngaki, by impudence rather than any right, one he used on certain occasions. Very potent.

If, in the morning, Big Man was found dead, no one would greatly grieve and he, Nyangtui, could make up some kind of story to his own credit.

He was close to the mats when, suddenly, there flashed into his eyes a blinding beam. It held him in its wash, dazzled, astounded. Back of it came the voice of Big Man.

"I am awake, Nyangtui! My *aitu* wakened me. Put down that dart, it would not harm me. Go back to your mats."

Fallon switched off the torch, watched Nyangtui crawling back like a whipped dog. Daylight was strong now. Nyangtui's eyes beheld the still faintly radiant figure of Big Man rising from the ground.

"It is not Mauinui who lives there," said Fallon. "It is Ufitipele, son of the gods of fire. I have spoken with him. He has told me many things. Some about you, Nyangtui."

Curiosity overcame terror.

"What?" gasped the pseudo-wizard.

"Those things you must speak of yourself," said Fallon. "I will take you there some night. If you are a true wizard, you will not be harmed."

He had subdued Nyangtui for the

time, but he was going to change his quarters if he was still alive at nightfall. He knew that if he lost out against Tomolu he would not be spared. Big Man would furnish his own funeral baked meats.

TOMOLU was slick with oil. He looked like some veteran bull sea lion hauled out to do battle as he took place on the *sing-sing* ground. Fallon had guessed about the oil, had seen other fights, though none quite like this one. He had helped himself to oil in a calabash belonging to Nyangtui.

He had pondered his tactics. Tomolu's fat was a good deal like blubber on a whale. A protection, a sort of armor through which fists must drive hard and deep to have effect. He had at least three chins, folds of flesh to defend his jaw.

He might be tired out, if he would fight that sort of battle, but Fallon doubted if he could draw him out into taking the offensive. Tomolu was the challenged; the attack was up to Fallon. It discounted his superior agility, his science. He knew that, in any event, the savage onlookers, ringed about the arena, would not relish anything but hard blows, strenuous wrestling.

He would be no match for Tomolu at close quarters. Once let those mighty arms get about him and he would be crushed, for all he could do. Once let them strike him fairly and they would bludgeon him down. He would have to strike, strike shrewdly and strike fast, bewilder Tomolu if he could.

The chief awaited him grimly, ponderous, stripped to a loin cloth. His legs were like oaks, planted in the ground. His neck was greater than Fallon's thigh. He was solid and he looked impregnable.

As Fallon advanced, warily, Tomolu opened his arms, his big hands waiting to clutch. He could tear apart an ordinary man.

Then, with a sound as if a drum had been beaten, Fallon darted in and out, planting two blows with all his strength over Tomolu's heart.

Tomolu grunted, looked surprised, waddled forward and as Fallon came in again he grasped at him, lost hold because of the slick skin, then caught Fallon's beard.

The pain was sharp, the astounding ignominy matched the danger. Tomolu laughed and hauled him closer. Fallon lunged out hard, right and left, repeated, to the face, to the eyes, five times, and then jerked loose, his chin bloody, part of his carefully grown whiskers in Tomolu's clutch.

HE had one of the chief's eyes closed, the other closing. That was his game. It would not suffice. He had to bring down his man, but it was the only way to fight him, and those rapierlike blows and swift retreat were not to the chief's liking. Tomolu wanted a straining of sinews, a matching of muscles.

He roared, rather than grunted, and advanced. Fallon wanted decisive victory. To make a running event of it would not establish his prestige properly. He must accept combat as ordained.

He ducked a swinging buffet that would surely have stunned him, came up inside Tomolu's guard, smashing again over the heart and realized his mistake. Some great primeval gorilla seemed to have clasped him. He was like an infant, a David fool enough to get within Goliath's grasp.

Fallon was strong, but his greatest efforts could not stop that slow crushing of his ribs, that bending of his back. He gasped for breath, his lungs were burning pits.

Blindness meant nothing to Tomolu now. He held Fallon as an octopus might. He grunted with contempt.

Fallon summoned all his reserve strength. He was fighting now for life. His back would be broken if he did not get out of that fearful grip. He would be flung aside and, that night, Tomolu would choose tidbits from him, acquire his *mana,* his courage, his vaunted wizardry.

Fallon put out burst after burst of dynamic fury. Sweat broke through the oil. Tomolu's great body stank with it. Big Man? He was a child.

Tomolu shifted his locking hands and wrists lower toward Fallon's loins. This would be the end, to snap the spine, then to spurn the presumptuous fool. He, Tomolu, was still invincible. So! This was his victim, who could not hurt him.

Fallon's arms were free. He writhed, bending backward, slugging. Once again to the heart; this time he knew he had reached through that shield of fat.

Tomolu gasped, his face changed color. One over the swollen eyes, that brought spurts of blood, and hurt.

Tomolu winced, then set himself to his last clinch. Fallon was on the balls of his feet. It was now or never.

He had nothing left after his final bid. His fist struck Tomolu over the temple like a sledge-hammer.

For a moment the chief was stunned. His grip relaxed, his head swung sidewise and Fallon's left crashed behind his left ear. It broke Fallon's knuckles, drove them back, but the trick was done.

He stepped back from Tomolu's nerveless arms, out of that gorilla grasp. He watched the chief sway, fall to his knees, like a pole-axed bullock, pitch forward on his bloody face, blind, senseless, beaten.

CHAPTER VI.

BIG MAN'S STRATEGY.

FALLON gave Tomolu certain honors in defeat. He could have had him slain, have taken over his big house, his wives, all his effects; the skipper left them to him. After he had gone Tomolu might come into his own again. He was a beaten man now, body and spirit, but he was the best of all of them. Fallon had no desire for a second combat.

Not bare-handed.

He took over a house newly finished, he received the homage of the tribe, save for sulking Nyangtui, took their gifts, mats, calabashes, fine bark-cloth, food, accepting all but the prolific offer of young women. Now he was well on the way to his next move, but he did not hurry it.

He might be expected to know of the existence of the golden *tiki.* They thought him more than human. Like many spectators at a fight, they did not know where he had struck Tomolu. They did not credit fists with felling such a man without weapons. On the other hand, he did not want to appear too curious about the temple.

He solved that problem. Nyangtui helped, unwittingly. The half-wizard was none too easy in his cave since he had seen Big Man rising from the ground. And when Fallon demanded it for his own place of privacy to sleep in during the sweltering afternoons, Nyangtui obeyed and moved out.

So, gradually, Fallon brought up all he had left stowed in the banyan. He set up two *tabu* sticks outside the cave. By day they were ornamented with tufts of wool and feathers. At night they shone with radium paint. It was a *tabu* none might dare break.

At night, after midnight, he walked abroad with another shining wand, with his torch-ray in the other hand, throwing the beam about the place like an evil eye, his body shining with the fungus.

He was a god, as long as the going was good. The third night he went to the cliff edge, into the temple.

For the first time, on a platform at the far end, he saw the glamorous thing, the golden fetish! It was hideous, beyond question a lumpy nugget of pure gold, carved cunningly to a squatting shape, the lumpish face whittled down and featured. It was worth a fortune.

He wondered how much gold had been wasted in the shaping. He set his flash light with a full battery, facing the entrance of the temple, past rows of stuffed figures under skulls molded with clay into caricatures of their late owners. Past rack upon rack of moldering skulls. None would venture in.

The *tiki* was heavy, cumbersome, but he could handle it.

HE worked nights, from twelve to four, not daring to stay too long for fear of accident, having to hide all evidence of his toil.

The bush came close to the back of the temple, and he hacked it clear with his *bolo,* making an exit through the rear wall of the temple in the woven palm fronds. In his clearing he prepared his pit. He took water there, and oil.

The night came when, with tremendous exertion, he shifted the golden image outside, oiled it, laid it in the plaster he had brought. That mold spoiled for lack of time to set.

The next night he tried again. And all that morning he sat on the platform outside the temple. None came near him, for he set up other *tabu* rods, giving no explanation. It was better played that way, as a mystery, but he was glad when he had a mold of the *tiki* in two halves, the image back in place once more.

He was not an expert at the job of casting in plaster of Paris, but the interior of the temple was dim. None ever came there, though he did not doubt that on certain occasions, as when the moon was full, or a crisis offered, they might hold ceremonial there.

He got his cast, trimmed it, gilded it, and rubbed it down with dirt to dull it. He had weighted the cast with stones, plugged up the base somewhat clumsily, but when at last the fake *tiki* stood beside the original, the semblance was good enough to pass muster. Nothing brighter than a small fire on a flat stone ever burned at the temple end.

He was not through yet. He meant to make assurance doubly sure, to provide against accident. By the end of the second week he had finished. Tomolu was about again, a beaten man, seated always in the shade. Fallon knew the tribe was waiting for him to make some decisive move as its new chief, and, now that he was through, he ordered a feast.

There was a great slaughter of pigs, a bringing of fish and turtle, steaming of yams. Tomolu stayed away, but Fallon sent him liberal portions. The tribesmen gorged themselves, Nyangtui among them.

Afterward there was a dance, Fallon deified as "Big Man." It lasted until red dawn swung above the bush. The next day they slept.

Fallon made up for his nightly vigils by afternoon siestas. He still went nights to the temple on the cliff. In a few days the Water Witch would be returning. He had secured coils of native rope, made a sling in which to place the *tiki,* heaved it close to the cliff edge, felled a tree he could use as a snubbing post.

Every morning he took place outside his house and listened to grievances, settling them, none disputing. Nyangtui sulked continually.

IT was early morning, two hours before dawn, on the twenty-first day of Fallon's stay. The strain was telling on him. He had the golden *tiki,* ready to let over the cliff. So far the natives had kept aloof from the temple. It was his. But he was not at ease. He wanted to get away.

He had a hunch that Nyangtui was spying on him, as far as he dared. The wizard could not do much, unless he found out the trick of the faked *tiki.* That was not likely. Fallon told himself it was not at all a bad job.

But he sensed trouble, somewhere. There had been rustlings in the bush back of the temple occasionally. No one but Nyangtui would be abroad after dark, he fancied, and there was little for Nyangtui to see now in his clearing. Already the jungle was claiming it. But the *tiki* hidden there might give him away.

Fallon was on the rim of the cliff, waiting for the schooner that was not due for twenty-four hours.

Suddenly he stiffened. A vessel was stealing along the reef! A boat putting off. They had come ahead of time.

He could not see plainly in the darkness, but he glimpsed the gleam of the breakers, the seafire that broke before the stroke of the oars, as a whaleboat came through the passage, came under the cliff. A low whistle sounded.

He answered. A voice came up the sheer face of the cliff. Not Riley's.

"Fallon, this is Jordan."

"Jordan?" Why Jordan?

"You've had some hard luck. But if you got what you went after, you won't mind that. The Water Witch was wrecked on Gooney Shoals. Laid up at Malolo a week ago. Riley's got a broken leg. Billings is all bunged up. He told me where to come. Couldn't leave a white man here, even if you and me don't hit it off. Have you got it?"

"Got what?" Here was news of disaster, yet Fallon hesitated. This was his chance to leave. "Where do you come in, Jordan?" he asked. He did not trust Jordan.

"I'm doin' the white thing. I trust you to do the same. Give me a quarter. That's fair enough, ain't it? A quarter of what you get out of it."

"That's fair enough, Jordan." But there was something here that didn't sound fair. Fallon had no time, no opportunity, to probe it.

"Let down the *tiki.* Then follow it."

There was silence, then the rustling of the bush. A heavy mass descended to the boat hovering at the base of the cliff. Men emptied the sling.

"Much obliged, Fallon. Your little pal, Billings, couldn't keep off the booze. He spilled where you'd gone, an' told us you didn't have any weapons when you went ashore. So I ain't botherin' about that. This image 'll pay me for the time you cleaned up my place. I'm not going back to Malolo. I've sold out. Try and find me, Fallon. Good night."

The boat shot off with its load, sparkles of seafire back to the reef, back to the schooner that Fallon knew now was not his own. He squatted on the cliff alone, watching them.

Then he heard again the rustling back of him, coming clear of the jungle. He sprang to his feet, *bolo* in hand.

It was Nyangtui. He had watched, had overheard, and seen. In his hands were a bow and arrow, the bow drawn, the dart poisoned. He meant to kill, to report all. They would find the plaster *tiki* in the temple—but that did not matter now.

Fallon ducked, switched his flash light on Nyangtui's malevolent face that blinked in the strong ray as he loosed the little venomed shaft. Fallon flung his *bolo,* saw the steel bite into Nyangtui's neck, saw him fall, thrashing on the ground.

The dart had passed on, winging out to fall into the lagoon below. Death had missed him by inches. But it had not missed Nyangtui. The lagoon received him, the sharks took him.

"YOU said three weeks from date," said Riley. "I knew Billings got drunk, but I didn't see what he could give away more than he'd always talked about. Jordan sold out to the Sunlight Soap people. I thought he'd gone to Suva. That's what he gave out.

"I suppose he thought that what you figured worth going after was worth his while too. Anyway, he took the chance to call here."

"I wish him joy of it," said Fallon. "I didn't trust him. He thought he had me in a cleft stick. But he didn't know I'd made plaster of Paris molds of the *tiki.* I made two of 'em, in case the one might not stand up. It's pretty moldy in that temple. I weighted both of 'em with rocks to hold 'em steady. They get earthquake tremors on that island every now and then.

"If Jordan was on the square, of course he'd have waited for me to come down the rope. But he thought he had the real thing and beat it. I wouldn't have risked myself aboard with him, anyway, not with the *tiki.* So I gave him the duplicate cast. We've got the original. I don't blame Billings so much, the poor divvle."

"You don't have to worry about him," said Riley. "He passed out the night we left. He figured Jordan was up to some double cross. Jordan might have told him so. And he got drunk—too drunk.

"We found Billings face down in a shore pool, what the crabs had left of him."

"God rest his soul!" said Fallon.

It was the next morning, the morning of the appointed day. Jordan had made his twenty-four-hour margin with his powered schooner. He was leagues off now. Fallon wondered whether he had discovered the falsity of the image. He would not come back. Jordan knew the Water Witch, unwrecked, was sailing for Niuti.

"I'd like to be there when he finds out," said Fallon. "Riley, you get your whack. We're set for life."

A *kanaka* on deck hailed them. They went up. They were well off the land, but, heading for Niuti, was a fleet of canoes, sailing from Ifati.

"They're on a raid," said Fallon. "I doubt if they win out. There's one real fighting man on the island. He had me down, save for the grace of God and a little luck. Tomolu! This will put him on his feet again. They'll have them spotted. It's not up to us to interfere, Riley."

The schooner winged her way east.

Tomolu, Tomolu alone—since Nyangtui was missing, since the mysterious Big Man who had worsted him was also gone—entered the temple. In the dusk he saw the *tiki*. Glamour of gold was nothing to him, but here was the fetish of his tribe. Ngaki had found it, the magic stone. While they held it, they could know no defeat.

He made obeisance, he repeated the invocations Ngaki had used, and he felt the spirit of Ngaki in the place. Nyangtui was an impostor. As for the stranger, he had come and gone. Tomolu reigned again. Mighty eater and mighty fighter. He would show these men from Ifati what to expect from Niuti.

He went out and bellowed to his mustering tribesmen.

The gilded plaster image stood, glinting a little in the morning sunbeams that filtered back to it. It was still a god, an emblem, a fetish. It would serve Tomolu's time.

THE END.

Caveman Stuff

CANARIES may not come from the Canary Islands, but cavemen do! A few hours' motoring out of Las Palmas, the giant island coaling port, brings one to a village of cave dwellers lost among the dun-colored island cliffs under the clouds. Here the queerest of villages wanders, burrowing underground. The village lanes twist over a rabbit warren of tunnels and grottos, and quaint doorways peer out from under ledges of rock and scraggy, cactus-grown crags.

Goats and chickens galore compose the traffic on the rocky overhead roads; but a visitor's approach will be greeted by the entire populace. The mole men poke out of their tunnel-mouths to give a sleepy stare at the sunshine. Wrinkled crones and wretched urchins pop from the face of the hillside, carrying bits of crude crockery and pottery and hand work to sell.

The mole people are unsavory in dress and feature; but their homes, on inward inspection, prove snug retreats. Rugs hang the plastered cave walls, bricks make a flooring. There will be crude furniture, but neatly devised to fit the narrow confines of the cave. Cookery is done in a fireplace scooped out of the back wall, and what smoke fails to linger in the cave may escape from a tiny hole in the ceiling. Like the Irish of the song, the Canary cave dwellers keep animals in their parlors; but on the whole their caves give the aspect of dry and cozy—if somewhat odorous—cottages.

These primitive-minded troglodytes are not indigenous to the Canaries, but are believed to be a degenerate early-Spanish type. They live the simple existence of dawn men, but from toddling infant to aged hag they know a twentieth century trick or two, and display a knowledge of English. Out reaches a dirty palm toward the visitor, and the caveman recites his English lesson. "Wan penny, meester? Wan penny?"

Theodore Roscoe.

"Who killed him?" Gillian snapped

The Lost Punch

Gillian Hazeltine, the Silver Fox, needs all his criminal legal lore to defend the boxer whom he himself had put in the shadow of the electric chair

By GEORGE F. WORTS

Author of "A Reptile Named Robard," "The Haunted Yacht Club," etc.

LEADING UP TO THIS INSTALLMENT

GILLIAN HAZELTINE, the famous criminal lawyer of Greenfield, probably never had a stranger case than is brought him by his friend Paddy Tobin, the boxing manager, because he knows Gillian is a fight fan.

Paddy's protégé, Tim "Battling" Bunce, has been the victim of a tragic triangle, when the parents of his sweetheart, Kitty Kelly, nagged and drove her to marry the light heavyweight champion, Jake Mullin. A brute at heart, Mullin tortures and beats his wife, and adds a refinement of cruelty by inviting Bunce to be his sparring partner—so he can witness Kitty's unhappiness. At length Mullin provokes Tim Bunce to threaten him, then creeps up behind Bunce and knocks him out.

Mullin is disappointed in his hope that Bunce would die. Bunce recovers, and the doctors Paddy brings him say that he is uninjured. But he can-

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not seem to punch with his old-time spirit and power. Paddy has always known that Bunce had the mightiest wallop he had ever seen; but the boy was over-modest, believing that his knock-outs were flukes, and nothing Paddy can do will change that belief. Now that worry over Kitty has wrecked Bunce's life, he can no longer put up a good fight; as he says to Gillian, it seems as if something is holding back his arm. Paddy wants to know whether he should advise Tim to kill Mullin, or what. Gillian knows there is no law to touch Mullin; but he lays his plans.

That night, Bunce cannot seem to fight, and is knocked out by an inferior fighter, while Mullin sneers at Bunce and at his wife. Gillian goes to Tim's dressing room, and finally arouses the boy by charging him with throwing the fight, claiming he's crooked, and that Mullin has been telling every one, including Kitty. Then Gillian tells the enraged fighter that he can find Mullin at the Black Cat night club. Bunce starts there, to beat Mullin up; and Gillian, seeing success in sight for his plan to convince Bunce of the power of his punch, sends Paddy after him, with orders to pick up a policeman en route.

CHAPTER V (*Continued*).

THE BEST-LAID PLANS—

GILLIAN HAZELTINE returned to the main entrance of the auditorium. Most of the crowd was gone, but among the loiterers he found Finister Chardon, the reformer. Chardon was talking to a semicircle of bored and gloomy newspaper men.

The criminal lawyer paused and watched the scene. Finister Chardon had succumbed not long ago to what Gillian callously called Front Page Itch. The greedy-eyed little man had discovered how easy it was, by attacking this civic evil and that public nuisance, to find his name springing out at him from the front pages of the newspapers.

Gillian believed that few reformers were sincere or honest. It was his private belief that they were all hypocrites and that they had an insensate greed for publicity. He knew many things about this whited sepulchre of a Chardon.

He listened to Finister Chardon now. The reformer was saying, in an oratorical manner:

"All of you gentlemen saw what I saw to-night—a series of revolting spectacles; men springing at each other like beasts, to pummel and pound each other, to attempt, if possible, to batter each other into insensibility. You saw blood spilled. You saw men struck down as if they were swine in a stockyard. I say, gentlemen, and I say it with all the indignation of a decent man aroused, that this so-called 'sport' of prize fighting is degrading and harmful and vicious."

He paused and Gillian reflected that nothing that Finister Chardon was saying was new. Simply because Finister Chardon was one of the city's wealthiest and most powerful citizens, it happened to be news. The publicity-loving banker went on:

"Gentlemen, I have never attended a prize fight before. I came to-night with an open mind. Sport, if deserving, should be encouraged. I was anxious to know whether prize fighting was a fit spectacle for my daughter and my son to watch. If so, I would lend it my hearty support. But what happened? My blood turned cold at those

spectacles of savagery I witnessed. You can quote me as saying emphatically that prize fighting is the most demoralizing influence in this country to-day. That is all I have to say."

Josh Hammersley was one of the reporters. There was upon his face the look of a man who has eaten something that is not comfortably digesting. He saw Gillian and winked. Strolling over to the lawyer, he said:

"Gill, can't something be done about this old reptile? All of this hooey he has been spilling must go on the front page. I wish my paper had the courage to print in a parallel column some of the facts of his private life—the lousy old hypocrite!"

Gillian grinned and said: "I thought the press was free."

Josh snorted and went out. He had to catch the last edition with the interview.

The reformer waited until the last of the reporters had asked his last perfunctory question. Then he strolled over to Gillian.

"Mr. Hazeltine," he said solemnly, "I must say that I was astonished to see you at the very ringside to-night with your charming wife. It seems to me that men of your standing in this community should set an example to the youth of Greenfield. What a revolting spectacle it was!"

Gillian glanced at his watch. It was eleven twenty. Battling Bunce would soon reach the Black Cat. Paddy Tobin would arrive there a few minutes later.

"IF you are asking for my opinion," said Gillian, "there are evils in this community which are much more deserving of your attention than prize fighting. The night clubs."

Finister Chardon looked at him.

"The night clubs?" he repeated.

"They are," said Gillian, "like cancers gnawing at the very civic heart of Greenfield. You should see them with your own eyes, Mr. Chardon. You should see young girls wearing not enough clothing to cover them decently."

He paused and watched the results. A brighter gleam had come into the reformer's greedy little blue eyes.

"These girls, hardly more than children," Gillian went on, "dance in nothing more than chiffon. It is deplorable. Why not see one of these places for yourself? Draw your own conclusions."

Again he paused. Still brighter gleamed the reformer's little eyes. And Gillian knew that Finister Chardon was snared. Finister Chardon was seeing his name once again on the front pages, this time denouncing those sinks of iniquity known as the night clubs. It was Gillian's intention that Finister Chardon should see his name on the front pages in still another connection.

"My car is outside, Mr. Chardon. I will be delighted to drop you off at the Black Cat. You need no introduction there, no card of admission."

"I consider it my civic duty," said Finister Chardon, "to go to the Black Cat. But I won't trouble you, Mr. Hazeltine. I have my own car."

Gillian said good night to him and walked out to Vee's limousine. When they reached home, Gillian went at once to his study to await Paddy Tobin's telephone call. He seated himself at his desk and lighted a cigar. The hands of the little gold clock at the back of his desk moved to midnight and on to half-past twelve.

Gillian grew uneasy. If his plans had miscarried, he was certain that

Tim Bunce would be beyond human help.

At twelve forty, Gillian heard the silvery tinkling of the back-door bell. He sat up alertly. That doorbell at this time of night invariably meant trouble. It was said that the underworld had beaten a path to the Hazeltine back door, but this was not literally true. There were invisible trails leading off, fanwise, from the back door through meadows and woodlots. Down these trails came men in trouble —after midnight.

The bell rang again. Gillian's Japanese houseman, Toro, was evidently sleeping soundly. The lawyer descended the back stairs into the kitchen. He unlocked the door, threw it open and peered into the night.

Paddy Tobin sagged against the doorjamb. His eyes were half-closed. The little Irishman was breathless. Great drops of sweat were running down his face.

Gillian took him by the arm, pulled him in and sat him down in a chair. Paddy's eyes rolled from side to side. He placed his hand over his heart and gasped:

"Just—a—minute."

Gillian waited. Paddy nipped his lower lip between his teeth.

"I—ran all the way. Mullin—is dead!"

"Who killed him?" Gillian snapped.

"Tim Bunce!"

"With what?"

"A right uppercut to the jaw!"

GILLIAN went into the dining room. When he returned with a bottle of Scotch and two tall, pale green glasses, Paddy stared at him broodingly. Gillian placed the glasses on the white-enameled kitchen table and opened the electric refrigerator. He put ice cubes into the glasses and uncapped a bottle of White Rock and mixed two stiff highballs.

Paddy Tobin disposed of his in gulps. He put the empty glass down and struck the table with his fist.

"Mr. Hazeltine, it's up to you. Unless you do something about it, Tim will go to the electric chair. And I doubt if there's anything you or any other lawyer can do about it. It was first degree murder!"

Gillian said calmly: "Tell me what happened."

Paddy began to talk rapidly, in a thin, excited voice.

"I did just what you told me to do. I went down to the Black Cat. I stopped at the corner of Maplewood and Wayne to pick up a cop. I told him what you told me. I told him that Tim was on his way to the Black Cat to attack Jake Mullin.

"When the cop and I went in, Tim was sitting at a table over against the wall watching the door. If he recognized me, he didn't show it. The cop and I waited by the checkroom for ten minutes. A lot of people came in before Mullin did."

"Did Finister Chardon come in?"

"Yes, sir. Right after he came in, Mullin blew along with Tiger Wales and Micky Welsh."

"Was Kitty with them?"

"No, sir. The head waiter took them to a table near the dance floor. Before they could sit down, Tim was over there. He knocked over two tables on his way over. There was an awful lot of excitement. A couple of women yelled, but I could hear Tim even above all the racket. He said, 'Call me a crook to my face, you rat!' And it happened before anybody could do anything. In all the fights I ever watched, I never saw a blow like it.

Do you remember the way Dempsey kept hitting Firpo in the second round? It was something like those punches, only it had more back of it.

"Even above the yelling and shouting, you could hear the crack of his fist on Mullin's jawbone. It was a terrible sound, Mr. Hazeltine. And it all happened so quick that nobody had time to do anything. Mike Flaherty, the cop, started from the checkroom window the minute Tim started from his table. By the time he reached Mullin's table, Mullin was lying there on the floor, as dead as a carload of bacon."

Paddy Tobin paused and picked up the fresh highball Gillian had mixed for him.

He went on:

"The cop grabbed Tim by one arm, and I grabbed him by the other."

Gillian snapped: "What did you say to him?"

"I told him to keep his mouth shut; that you would do the talking."

"Good," Gillian approved.

"I stayed right with him, Mr. Hazeltine. Flaherty, the cop, took him down to the Fourth Precinct jail in a taxicab, and I went along. He's down there now. And they've got him booked for murder."

Gillian was lighting a fresh cigar with steady hands. Paddy stared at him imploringly.

"MR. HAZELTINE, you've got men out of tight corners before, but what chance has Tim got? It was premeditated murder," Paddy moaned.

"No," said Gillian, "it was premeditated assault."

"What difference does it make? Won't that cop testify on the stand that I picked him up and took him there because Tim was going to assault Mullin? Won't there be a hundred witnesses who saw Tim go up and wallop Mullin in the jaw?"

"Yes," Gillian said.

"Didn't you get Tim into this?" Paddy cried.

"I did."

"Are you going to stand behind him? Are you going to go into court with him?"

"I am," said Gillian.

"But even if you can get him off—and how in hell can you possibly save him from the chair—even if you do, the boy's life is ruined."

"It was," Gillian pointed out, "ruined before he killed Mullin. You retained me to get his punch back, didn't you? I got it back, didn't I?"

Paddy groaned.

Gillian pressed a button set into the wall near the back door. He said to Paddy:

"My chauffeur will take you home, Paddy. I can't tell you to go to bed and stop worrying. I admit that this is one of the toughest cases I have ever undertaken, and I admit that things look pretty black.

"But there are ways, Paddy. I'll do my best."

"Yes, sir; I know you will," said Paddy.

But there was no confidence in his tones. His eyes still were terrified, and behind that terrified look, Gillian knew, was a picture of Tim Bunce being strapped into the electric chair.

When Paddy was gone, Gillian returned to his study. He opened a new box of cigars, placed his feet on the desk and began to smoke. The first gray of dawn at the window found him still sitting there, his attitude unchanged, his face gray and tired. But

the sixteenth cigar had given him an idea.

CHAPTER VI.

CHARGED WITH MURDER.

THE occupant of Cell No. 47 was a thoroughly defeated young man.

When Gillian, that next morning, stopped midway down the long corridor and looked in, Tim Bunce was seated on the side of his cot with his elbows on his knees and his chin in his hands. His eyes looked burned out.

Said Gillian: "Tim, I want to congratulate you. That was a wonderful punch."

The fighter stared at him blankly, then he slowly stood up and came to the door.

"Are you trying to be funny?" he growled.

Gillian gave him a look of surprise. "Funny?" he repeated. "I don't think it's funny. I think it's wonderful. Last night you couldn't hit Kid Murphy hard enough to make him blink. A half hour later, you delivered one of the most terrific punches in the history of prize fighting. Your punch came back!"

"No, it didn't," the young man disagreed. "I happened to hit him just so. It wasn't much of a punch. It was an accident."

"Tim," said Gillian, "won't anything convince you that you have one of the greatest punches in ring history?"

"It was an accident," Tim insisted. "And it's going to send me to the chair. Well, let them send me to the chair. I don't care."

"I do," said Gillian.

"Well, I don't. What have I got to live for?"

"Kitty's free now."

"What of it? Do you suppose she would be interested in a murderer?"

"Girls have stood by men through worse troubles than this. Look here, Tim. Don't you want to get out of this jam, and marry Kitty, and go back to the ring and become famous and successful?"

"What chance is there?" demanded that over-modest young man.

"I'm going to do my best," Gillian promised. "They'll take you into the homicide court in a few minutes. I will meet you there. The plea will be not guilty. Later, you will appear before the Grand Jury. Have reporters been in here this morning?"

"Yes, sir."

"What did you tell them?"

"Nothing. I referred them to you."

"Keep on referring them to me. I will do all of your talking."

Battling Bunce said sullenly: "Oh, what's the use? It's all a waste of time."

Gillian turned and walked away. He was furious. How could he untangle one of the greatest punches in ring history from the shyest, most modest nature he had ever encountered? How could he convince this lion that he was not a lamb?

Gillian's humor was not improved when, as he was descending the jail steps, he saw the district attorney climbing out of his coupé at the curb. Between Gillian and the district attorney there existed—and had existed for years—the heartiest enmity.

Adelbert Yistle was a square-built man, with a strong judicial forehead surmounted by a mop of iron-gray hair, and a massive pair of jaws surmounted by an iron-gray mustache. Mr. Yistle was a commanding figure. He was extremely ambitious, and

hoped some day to become governor of the State.

THE district attorney's mouth tightened when he saw Gillian. He said bluntly:

"Is it true, Gillian, that you are going to defend this prize fighter who murdered Jake Mullin?"

Gillian looked at him coldly and nodded. "Yes, Bert."

"That means, I suppose," the district attorney said testily, "that we are going to have another court room circus."

"Perhaps," Gillian agreed with a hard grin, "it does."

"A hundred witnesses saw Bunce strike Mullin down in cold blood. It was premeditated murder. And I'll bet a dollar to a plugged nickel that you're going into court with a plea of not guilty and a line-up of trick witnesses."

"On the contrary," said Gillian, "I am convinced that Bunce is guilty as hell."

"Then why are you taking his defence?"

"Some one," Gillian murmured, "must defend the underdog."

The district attorney's expression became even more grim.

"You know damned well that the calendar is crowded. You're going into court with some kind of three-ring circus. Damn it, I can tell it by the look in your eye! You don't care how congested the courts are! You don't care how long really important cases are held back! No! You'll take my time, and judges' time, and valuable court room time, to put on your clowning act!"

"Thank you, Bert," said Gillian dryly, "for the suggestion."

"You won't," Mr. Yistle stated angrily, "find much sympathy in any court room in this town. You might as well save your trickery. It won't work. I am going to send this Battling Bunce to the chair, and all your foxiness won't stop me!"

"You will have to admit," said Gillian, "that that was a wonderful punch. A terrific punch! It may go down in history as the most terrific punch ever landed by one pugilist on the jaw of another."

"It will, if I have anything to say about it!" snapped the district attorney.

"Thank you, Bert," Gillian said. "I wanted to make sure that we agreed on that."

He went on down the steps, leaving Mr. Yistle standing there, staring after him with an expression of chagrin and puzzlement.

It was only fair for Mr. Yistle to assume that Gillian was up to his old tricks. He was going into a court room with something else in his mind other than pure justice.

That morning he stood beside Battling Bunce in homicide court and entered a plea of not guilty to murder. Later, he stood beside that lamblike lion when he was called before the Grand Jury. The Grand Jury hearkened intelligently to a mass of carefully prepared evidence and remanded Timothy Bunce, murderer, to the court of Special Sessions, then sitting.

The newspapers had become tremendously interested in the case. The pertinent facts in the love triangle of Kitty Kelly, Jake Mullin, and Tim Bunce were excavated from various sources and paraded upon the front pages. The murder was referred to by the tabloids as a "Passion Crime." Startling court room disclosures were promised.

Finister Chardon, the reformer, seized upon this golden opportunity to ventilate his views upon the revolting sport of prize fighting.

Then suddenly, mysteriously, his name vanished from the front pages. It was as if he had opened his mouth to utter still louder denunciations when he discovered a fishbone sticking in his throat.

Who put that fishbone there? Who had suddenly obstructed that flow of oratory?

CHAPTER VII.

THE TRIAL OPENS.

EVERYBODY in the court room stood up as Judge Barlow took his place on the bench. He was a slender, scholarly-looking man, with a long, narrow face, a high forehead and a very sensitive mouth. He nodded to a bailiff and the bailiff droned:

"Oyez! Oyez! Oyez! The Superior Court within and for Greenfield County, criminal term, is open and in session at this place. All persons having cause or action who are summoned to appear herein will give attention according to the law."

Judge Barlow said: "You may call the jury," and a sheriff hastened to obey him. And presently twelve good men and true filed in and took their places in the jury box. The clerk now read the charge. On its completion, Gillian Hazeltine arose and said: "The defendant pleads not guilty."

Mr. Yistle and his assistant, Mr. Bullock, looked at Gillian narrowly, as though they expected to see him produce a rabbit from a silk hat. Gillian sat down beside the defendant and the trial began.

In his opening address to the jury, Mr. Yistle stated simply that he would endeavor to prove that the accused was guilty of a crime which, according to the statutes, would leave the jury no alternative but to send Timothy Bunce to the electric chair.

"I will prove to you gentlemen, by the testimony of credible witnesses, that the accused did, with premeditation and deliberation and forethought, bring about the death of Jake Mullin, thereby making him guilty of the crime of murder in the first degree. Will Dr. Cutler take the stand?"

Dr. Cutler was the coroner of Greenfield. A middle-aged man with a clipped gray mustache and an air of great self-possession, Dr. Cutler made an excellent witness. He answered questions crisply and without hesitation.

Mr. Bullock examined him for the prosecution.

"Dr. Cutler, on the night of June 20 were you called to a night club on Maplewood Avenue to make an examination of the body of a man who had been killed there—the Black Cat Club, to be exact?"

"Yes, sir."

"Did you ascertain the identity of this corpse?"

"Yes, sir. The dead man was Jake Mullin, the light heavyweight champion."

"Kindly describe to the jury how Jake Mullin had been killed."

"He was struck forcibly in the jaw. The jaw was fractured. The force of the blow traveling backward along the jawbone ruptured a ligament connecting the base of the skull to the Atlas, or the first upper bone of the spinal column. This, in turn, caused a hemorrhage in the spinal cord, resulting in almost instant death."

"Thank you, Doctor; that will be

all. Does the defence wish to cross-examine?"

GILLIAN stood up with a smile.

"Doctor," he said, "in all the years of your experience, have you ever known of a death that was brought about in quite this fashion; that is to say, the death of a strong man?"

"No, Mr. Hazeltine; I have not."

"In the course of your examination of the *corpus delicti*, did you have cause to note the muscular and bony development in the neck, face and shoulders?"

"I did, sir."

"Were you impressed with the unusual strength of bone and muscular tissue in the dead man's neck, shoulders and so forth?"

"Yes, sir."

"This man's muscles were developed far above those of the average man, were they not?"

"They were indeed, Mr. Hazeltine. Jake Mullin was a tremendously powerful specimen. His muscles were like ropes. And he had particularly heavy bones."

"You would say, would you not, that to cause such a man's death, a blow on the jaw must have been more than an ordinary blow. Would you not say that it must have been almost a superhuman blow?"

"It was a terrific blow," the coroner agreed.

Mr. Yistle stirred. So did Mr. Bullock. The district attorney said to his assistant: "Do you suppose that Hazeltine is planning to prove that some other man struck that blow?"

And his assistant, an incurable yes-man, answered: "The very same thought had occurred to me, Mr. Yistle."

"Now, Doctor," Gillian was saying, "you have, now and then, examined the contestants in prize fights, have you not?"

"Yes, sir; I have."

"You have, then, been in a position to study closely and professionally the results of knock-out blows to the jaw. In your experience, Doctor, have you ever seen results comparable to those which resulted from the blow with which the defendant struck Jake Mullin?"

"No, Mr. Hazeltine; never."

"It would be almost impossible to exaggerate the terrific power of that blow which fractured a jawbone, tore off a ligament and created a hemorrhage in the spinal cord?"

"It was," the doctor agreed emphatically, "a mighty blow."

"Now, Doctor," Gillian went on, "have you ever examined a man killed by the kick of a horse—specifically, the kick of a horse in the jaw?"

"Yes, sir; I once performed an autopsy on such a man."

"Will you tell me whether or not the results of that horse's kick and the uppercut that killed Jake Mullin were similar?"

"They were almost identical. In each case, the jawbone was fractured, the ligament was torn and the cord was ruptured."

"So that you would say, would you, Doctor, that the defendant's punch was almost, or exactly, the equivalent of the blow delivered by the hind hoof of a killing horse?"

The doctor was smiling. "It could be expressed that way. Yes, sir."

Mr. Yistle arose majestically to his feet. "Your honor," he said irritably, "I beg that you request my honorable adversary to refrain from indulging in his circus tricks. These questions and

answers are utterly irrelevant. The coroner, we all know, is called to the stand merely to establish for legal purposes the identity of the *corpus delicti* and to describe the manner whereby his death was brought about."

Gillian bowed to Mr. Yistle and again to the bench.

"Your honor, I withdraw any questions which Mr. Yistle takes exception to. I am through with this witness."

HE sat down. There was a puzzled look in Battling Bunce's eyes.

"It was a wonderful punch, Tim," Gillian whispered to him.

"It was an accident," Tim insisted.

"I will convince you yet," Gillian promised. "It was like the kick of a horse. It was a terrific punch."

"It wasn't, but even if it was, all these questions of yours make me look guiltier than ever."

Gillian dismissed his objection with a careless flip of the hand. "We will get around to that in due time, Tim. The main point is: what a wonderful punch that was!"

The next witness called by the State was Tiger Wales, a colored man. His resemblance to Jack Johnson, of fistic fame, was pronounced. With perfect poise, the black man took the stand. His grin was infectious. Half the crowd began to smile.

Duly sworn, he testified, under rapid questions, that he was a heavyweight prize fighter, and that he had entered the Black Cat Club with the murdered man and Micky Welsh, a welterweight fighter, at approximately 11.45 P.M.

"Will you kindly describe to the jury what happened?"

"Yas, suh. We-all went over to a table an' jes' when we wuz settin' down, there was this ruckus behind us. First thing Ah knowed, this Battlin' Bunce came a chargin' up to Mr. Mullin and he says, 'Call me a crook to my face, will you?' An' befo' Mr. Mullin could do a thing—*wham!* Dassall."

The colored fighter relaxed with his beatific grin and the court room roared.

When order had been restored, Mr. Yistle frowningly requested the witness to elaborate on that word "*Wham.*"

"Just what do you mean by *wham?* Who whammed whom?"

"'A white boy yonder—he whammed Mr. Mullin."

"With what?"

"With the purtiest right uppercut Ah ever laid mah eyes on, suh."

"I see. Did Mr. Mullin say anything to him prior to his striking that blow?"

"No, suh; Mr. Mullin didn' hab time to say nuffin'."

"The defendant simply rushed up to him and—"

"*Wham!*" said the witness.

"You are certain, are you, Tiger, that Mr. Mullin did not strike the first blow, and that he said absolutely nothing calculated to provoke the defendant to anger?"

The black man blinked. "Says which?"

Judge Barlow leaned forward. "He means, Tiger, did Mr. Mullin say anything to Battling Bunce that might have made Bunce angry enough to strike him?"

"No, Jedge; he didn't say nuffin', and he didn't do nuffin'. He didn't have no time. It happened jes' lak I said. There was Mr. Mullin. Up comes Mr. Bunce. *Wham!* Good-by, Mr. Mullin! Dassall."

Mr. Yistle sat down. Gillian stood up. He walked over to the witness.

"Tiger," said Gillian, "you have

done a fair amount of whamming in your own time, have you not?"

"Yas, suh," agreed the grinning black man. "Ah've slapped over a few now and then."

"Ever kill a man with a punch to the jaw?"

"No, suh! Ah never killed a man nohow."

"Ever see a man killed with a punch to the jaw before?"

"No, suh; never seed it happen befo'."

"It must have been quite a punch."

"Ah'll say it was, boss man!"

"Did you ever, in all your ring experience, see a man hit as hard as that in the jaw?"

"No, suh. In all the fights Ah've seen everywhere, Ah never seed a punch lak that one befo'. Dat was de punch of punches."

"Did you see Dempsey knock out Willard in Toledo?"

"Yas, suh; Ah sho' did."

"Was the punch with which the defendant killed Jake Mullin, in your opinion, as hard or harder than the punches with which Dempsey—"

"Your honor," Mr. Yistle irritably interrupted, "may I be enlightened on a point? Is this a murder trial or a debate on the relative merits of the world's greatest punchers?"

JUDGE BARLOW looked at Gillian with twinkling eyes. The judge had one time remarked at a luncheon at the Lawyer's Club that he would rather see a good fight than eat.

"Perhaps," he gravely suggested, "Mr. Hazeltine has some intention of establishing a hypothetical point in connection with his defence."

"Your honor," Gillian returned, "I am tremendously curious. My questions are, I will admit, somewhat irrelevant to the issue. It has seemed to me that a scientific issue is involved. For my personal edification—and in the larger interests of science—I am anxious to ascertain whether or not the punch delivered by the defendant was or was not the most tremendous punch e v e r delivered by a prize fighter."

"I object strenuously," Mr. Yistle snapped, "to the pursuance of such an inquiry in this court room. The power of that punch was sufficient to kill a man. That has been proved. Legally, the issue is closed. I am certain that your honor and the gentlemen of the jury are not interested in the relative power of historic punches."

The expression on the face of Judge Barlow and on the faces of the twelve jurymen did not indicate that they agreed with Mr. Yistle.

Judge Barlow bent forward and said with an air of reluctance:

"Mr. Hazeltine, perhaps you would better confine your cross-examination to the issue at stake."

"Very well, your honor," said Gillian briskly. He faced the grinning witness. "Tiger, how many drinks had you had that evening before you went to the Black Cat with Mullin and Micky Welsh?"

"Objection!" roared Mr. Yistle.

"Overruled."

Gillian walked closer to the witness. "Isn't it true that you and Micky Welsh polished off a bottle of gin between you in Kid Murphy's dressing room? Don't lie, Tiger!"

"No, suh—yas, suh," the witness stuttered. "Mebbe Ah had—well, jes' a *drop*."

"A great big drop—about the size of your fist?"

"Ah reckon so, boss man."

Mr. Yistle's face was crimson. He

said furiously to Mr. Bullock: "Why in the devil didn't you find that out? It kills him as a witness!"

Mr. Bullock's Adam's apple bobbed up and down.

"Tiger," Gillian said fiercely, "you told me you had never killed a man, with your fist 'or nohow.' Wasn't that a lie? Didn't you once serve four years in Georgia for cutting a man's throat with a razor—"

"Lissen, lissen, boss man," the witness wailed, "Ah killed dat man. Sho' I did. But Ah—Ah was provoked. Dat man wuz fussin' around wid my woman. Ah wuz let off—"

"That's enough," Gillian stopped him. "Your honor, I respectfully request that the evidence of this witness be stricken from the record. His credibility is certainly impeachable."

Mr. Yistle did not even enter an objection. Judge Barlow turned to the stenographer and said:

"You will strike out the entire examination and cross-examination of this witness. Next witness!"

CHAPTER VIII.

"THE PUNCH MURDER."

THE State's next witness was John Grant, the head waiter at the Black Cat. He was a furtive-eyed individual and he had a guilty look. In response to Mr. Yistle's questions, he stated that he had just conducted the party containing Jake Mullin, Tiger and Mickey Welsh to the table when Bunce came running over and struck Mullin a terrific blow in the jaw.

"We won't go into the terrific nature of that blow," said the district attorney dryly. "We are merely interested in whether or not you saw or heard any provocation on the part of the deceased which would have justified the defendant in striking that blow. Did you or did you not?"

"I did not," stated Mr. Grant, with his eyes shifting about the ceiling.

"That will be all. Does the defence wish to ascertain just how powerful that blow was?"

The jury smiled. There was a ripple of amusement about the court room when Gillian asked:

"Mr. Grant, are you a fight fan?"

"I am. I go to all the big fights."

"Now, Mr. Grant, will you be so good as to indicate just where you were standing when the blow that killed Jake Mullin was struck?" Gillian indicated the diagram of the Black Cat which had been admitted as Material Exhibit A for the State.

"I was standing there." The witness pointed.

"How far were you from the table at which Mullin was standing?"

"About twelve feet."

"You had shown Mullin and his guests to the table and were on your way away?"

"Yes, sir."

"So that when the blow was struck your back was toward Mullin?"

The witness suddenly lifted his eyes to the ceiling again. "No, sir; I was backing away."

"As a servant backs out of the presence of royalty, for example?"

Mr. Yistle snapped: "Objection!"

The witness: "I was backing away!"

Mr. Hazeltine: "I wish the gentlemen of the jury to observe the little circles of white on this diagram. They indicate tables. These tables are, I believe, so close together that a man must squeeze sideways to pass between them. I want the witness to explain how he could have navigated—"

The witness: "I could do it in my sleep!"

Mr. Hazeltine: "Have you ever done it in your sleep?"

His honor: "Gentlemen! Mr. Hazeltine, what are you trying to prove?"

Mr. Hazeltine: "Merely, your honor, that the witness is a liar!"

Mr. Yistle: "Prove it!"

Mr. Hazeltine: "I think I have proved it."

THE witness's eyes were darting all about the room. He burst out now, in a whining voice: "I tell you, I saw Bunce punch Mullin in the jaw."

"He saw him!" Mr. Yistle exclaimed. "Your honor, I object to this pettifogging! If the defence has finished with this witness—"

"Not yet," said Gillian. "Mr. Grant, let us return to this punch. Whether you saw it out of the back of your head or not, is not the question. I want to know if that punch was, in your opinion, of sufficient force to kill a man."

"Yes, it was!"

"Did you, in all the years of your attendance of prize fights, ever see a punch to equal it?"

"No, sir!"

"Would you compare it in violence to the kick of a vicious horse?"

The witness: "All I know, it was a terrible punch. I never saw a horse kick a man in the jaw."

"But it was the most terrific punch you ever saw?"

"That's what I said."

"There was n o t h i n g accidental about it, was there, Mr. Grant? I mean, it didn't strike you that the punch was a trick punch?"

"No—it was a straight uppercut, or a plain uppercut, nothing else."

Very patiently but wearily Mr. Yistle broke in: "Your honor, I submit that every word of this cross-examination is immaterial and therefore inadmissible as evidence."

"So do I, your honor," Gillian cheerfully agreed. "Also, every word of the direct examination. I insist that this witness is a liar. I insist that he was walking away, not backing away, and that he could not have seen that punch."

The witness said angrily: "Well, I heard it, didn't I?"

Gillian pounced on that. "Did you?"

"I did!"

"What did it sound like?"

"It sounded like somebody breaking a plank across his knee."

"I submit, your honor," said Gillian, "that the entire testimony of this witness be held inadmissible to the record."

Judge Barlow said promptly: "It is so ordered. In my mind there is a grave question that this witness actually saw that punch delivered."

Gillian grinned at Mr. Yistle, and the district attorney glared. Judge Barlow adjourned the court for luncheon. In the babble that followed this order, Mr. Yistle strode over to Gillian.

"Don't think for a minute," he snarled, "that you've got my goat. I've got this case sewed up tight. As usual, you are making a travesty of the defence. Just as I said, you are trying to turn this court room into a three-ring circus. If necessary, I can produce six dozen witnesses who saw Bunce strike that blow. And if you goad me into it, I'll do it."

"I wonder," said Gillian dreamily, "if any of them are reputable. Tell me, Bert, have you honestly one reputable witness?"

"I'll show you," sputtered the district attorney.

Gillian grinned and walked away. He sought an obscure restaurant where six per cent draft beer was served; and proceeded to entertain eight reporters while he ate. Why, they unanimously wanted to know, was he hammering away on the murderous quality of the punch that had killed Jake Mullin?

"I will come clean with you," said Gillian. "I am out to prove that that was a superhuman punch—so powerful that no living man could have struck it!"

The eight reporters made sarcastic remarks. It was hinted that Mr. Hazeltine had an ax concealed in his sleeve.

"Hasn't he always?" cried Green, of the *Mirror*.

"Why bother about my motive?" Gillian jovially asked. "Isn't that punch giving you boys a story? Can't you illustrate it with drawings of other famous punches of history?"

"Is Kitty Kelly going to take the stand?" asked Burke of the *News*.

"Yes."

"Who are the other defence witnesses?"

"I can't answer that."

A very youthful and inexperienced reporter asked: "Mr. Hazeltine, do you think you have a chance of getting Bunce off?"

His seven contemporaries burst into laughter.

THE early afternoon editions of the tabloids contained the statement, over her photograph, that Kitty Kelly would take the stand for the defence. The widow of Jake Mullin had been in seclusion since the murder. She had, the tabloids truthfully said, been accessible to no one but Gillian.

The afternoon session was devoted to six more eye-witnesses to the blow that had felled and killed Jake Mullin. Each testified emphatically that Jake Mullin had said nothing, done nothing, to provoke the blow that had ended his life. Mr. Yistle was piling up evidence to establish beyond all doubt that the blow had not been struck in self-defence. Gillian devoted himself to heckling the witnesses, or, as Mr. Yistle described it so bitterly, pettifogging. He also questioned each witness as to the power of that blow. Was it as powerful as the kick of a vicious horse?

One enterprising tabloid published a "composite photograph," showing an agonized Jake Mullin being simultaneously struck by the fist of a ferocious Battling Bunce and by the hoof of a horse, with the caption, "Which Delivers the Greater Blow?"

The punch that killed Mullin was being referred to by the press more and more as "the greatest punch in history," "the most terrific punch ever delivered by a human." The tabloids began to refer to the case as the "Punch Murder."

Gillian instructed his secretary to start a scrap book of such clippings.

On the morning of the second day of the trial, the State produced six more eye-witnesses, each of whom, in turn, Gillian heckled until the court room was in an uproar. Mr. Yistle referred bitterly to his clowning. He resented the fact that the Punch Murder case was resolving itself into almost uncontrollable laughter.

When Gillian put the question to any witness, "Would you say that that punch was as powerful as the kick of a horse?" it was impossible for the bailiffs to restore order for sometimes as long as ten minutes. Only when

Judge Barlow reluctantly threatened to have the court room cleared did Gillian desist. But the humor of the situation had escaped bounds.

Once Mr. Yistle roared at Gillian: "Are you attempting to have this case laughed out of court?"

Gillian solemnly answered: "It is my serious opinion that it deserves to be laughed out of court."

No one seemed to mind Gillian's tactics except Mr. Yistle, Mr. Bullock and the accused. Battling Bunce was worried. Why, he wanted to know, wouldn't the jury laughingly return a verdict of guilty? It didn't strike *him* as funny. Not much.

"I thought you didn't care whether you were electrocuted or not," Gillian once flashed at him. "Have you changed your mind?"

"I don't want to die," stated Battling Bunce.

On the afternoon of the second day of the trial the State rested. Twenty witnesses to that now nationally famous punch had taken the stand. And it was the opinion of the press that Gillian Hazeltine did not have a case; that he was making merry at the expense of a doomed man.

CHAPTER IX.

THE CASE FOR THE DEFENCE.

"IS the defence ready?"

"The defence is ready, your honor."

Gillian arose from the counsel table and walked toward the jury. Perhaps ten feet from the box he stopped, folded his arms, and looked along the two lines of expectant faces. The entire court room seemed to hold its breath as he began.

"Gentlemen of the jury, you have heard the testimony given by a formidable array of witnesses, proving beyond the slightest doubt that Jake Mullin was struck in the jaw by the defendant with such force that, time after time, that blow has been compared to the kick of a killer horse.

"You heard one witness solemnly declare that the sound of the blow was comparable to that made when a plank is broken. Another, perhaps humorously, compared the sound to that of a safe falling from the top of a ten-story building upon a concrete sidewalk. What we have learned from this testimony is that the defendant, with the most terrific punch probably ever delivered in the history of scientific punching, killed the light heavyweight champion of the world—Jake Mullin.

"All of that, we know, has been proved. It now devolves upon me to prove to you that the human faculties in moments of great stress and excitement are prone to err. You have, gentlemen of the jury, doubtless heard accounts of conflicting testimony in so-called eye-witness reports to shootings. Of a given number of witnesses, no two will have heard the same number of shots fired; no two will agree upon the precise action which took place."

Gillian took a step nearer the jury box. His steel-blue eyes seemed to bore into the souls of the twelve jurymen. There was no humor about the famous criminal lawyer now. He was deadly in earnest.

"Gentlemen of the jury," he went on in hushed tones, "has it ever occurred to you to ask why, among such witnesses, not one of them saw the event precisely as it happened? Why?" Gillian repeated. "Let me tell you why! Because, out of a dozen witnesses, out of a dozen dozen such witnesses, not one of them saw it clearly! Why

did not one of them see it clearly? Because not one of them was a *trained observer!*"

Again Gillian paused. Again the quiet was so profound that a fly could be heard buzzing against a window-pane.

"Why was it," Gillian demanded in a sharper voice, "that of the twenty witnesses whose testimony you heard, each and every one of them overlooked the trifle that most counted—a tremendous trifle? Why? Because these witnesses were scared, excited, rattled; because not one of them is a trained observer."

Gillian again hesitated. Mr. Yistle looked at his yes-man and whispered: "I knew it! I knew he would spring something like this! But he can't get away with it!"

"No, sir!" breathed Mr. Bullock.

"My first witness," said Gillian, "will be Finister Chardon."

Mr. Yistle's eyes became round and slightly bulging. So did Mr. Bullock's. There was an audible stir at the press table.

FINISTER CHARDON, bland and imperturbable, walked up to the witness chair and sat down. Duly sworn, Mr. Chardon stated in answer to Gillian's rapid questions that he was the vice president of the Greenfield First National.

"In the past few years," Gillian said, "is it not true that you have become tremendously interested in rooting out the social and civic evils which exist in our city?"

Mr. Chardon admitted, with a smile, that this was indeed true.

"Is it not true, Mr. Chardon, that you took active steps which resulted in the suppression of cheap dance halls where the morals of the young women of Greenfield's working class were exposed to the most insidious temptations?"

"That is true, Mr. Hazeltine."

"Is it not true, Mr. Chardon, that you were personally responsible for stamping out of existence seven or eight bootleg dives where liquor, proved to contain wood alcohol, was being sold?"

"Yes, that is true, Mr. Hazeltine."

Gillian picked up a sheet of paper from his table, glanced at it, and put it down again.

"Mr. Chardon, on the night of June twentieth last, did you visit the Greenfield auditorium with the view of seeing for yourself whether or not prize fighting would demoralize the youth of this community?"

"I did, Mr. Hazeltine."

"After the fights, did you not go to the Black Cat Club with a view to seeing for yourself how wicked this night club was?"

"I did exactly that, Mr. Hazeltine."

"Before you tell us what you saw there that night, I wish you would tell the jury whether or not you consider yourself a trained observer, an expert observer."

"That is a question," answered the reformer, "which puts a severe strain on my modesty. I will answer it in this way: My research work has made it absolutely necessary for me to develop the highest powers of observation. I must overlook no detail. I must see not only the whole picture, but the most trivial items which go to make the picture."

Gillian saw Mr. Yistle suddenly smile and lean over to whisper to his yes-man.

He saw Mr. Bullock smile delightedly and nod his head.

"Now, Mr. Chardon," said Gillian,

"will you describe what you saw in the Black Cat Club on the night of June 20 in connection with the murder of Jake Mullin?"

"I saw it all clearly," said the reformer. "I was sitting within five feet of Jake Mullin when the blow was struck which killed him."

Several of the jurymen leaned forward. Mr. Yistle nervously stood up. He began fiddling with his gold watch fob as he always did when he was nervous.

"I had just been seated at my table—" Mr. Chardon continued.

"Kindly indicate on this diagram which table it was. The red circle indicates the table to which Mullin's party had been conducted by the head waiter."

Mr. Chardon leaned forward and indicated with his long forefinger one of the adjoining black circles. "That was the table."

"Proceed, Mr. Chardon," said Gillian.

"I was seated at this table I have indicated when Mr. Mullin, a colored man and a red-haired man, who I later learned were Tiger Wales and Micky Welsh, prize fighters, were ushered up by the head waiter."

THE reformer paused and cleared his throat. His bright little eyes traveled along the jury's faces.

"I was keenly interested in fighters, and I was taking particular note of every detail of Jake Mullin's costume, which consisted of a tan suit, a maroon vest and a grass-green necktie, when I saw him turn and glance sharply across the room, then beckon. A moment later, this young man who is sitting at the table there—" he indicated Battling Bunce. "That young man came hastening over in answer to Mullin's beckoning finger. He beckoned like this."

The witness held out his hand, palm up. He doubled up all of the fingers of the hand, but the forefinger. This he then rapidly crooked several times.

"There was a great deal of confusion," stated the reformer. "People who had recognized the light heavyweight champion and his two friends were shouting at them, but I was so close that I overheard every word that Mullin and Bunce said."

Mr. Chardon paused again. Gillian said gravely:

"Tell the jury just what was said, Mr. Chardon."

"When Bunce came up," the reformer obliged, "Mullin said to him, 'So this is where you are, you dirty little crook! I'll teach you to horn in where I am. I am going to knock you for a row of ashcans.' With that, he doubled up his right fist and drew it back to strike. But quicker than anything I have ever seen in my life, Bunce struck him!"

"Did Bunce say anything to him, Mr. Chardon?"

"Yes, Mr. Hazeltine. As he struck the blow, he exclaimed: 'Call me a crook to my face, will you?'"

"Thank you, Mr. Chardon. Does the State wish to cross-examine this witness?"

MR. YISTLE fairly sprang at Finister Chardon. He began firing questions at him. He demanded that Mr. Chardon prove his contention that he possessed exceptional powers of observation by describing in detail the decorations in the Black Cat Club. He attacked his description of the scene between Mullin and Tim.

"You might have memorized all this!" he shouted. Mr. Yistle was per-

spiring freely. He knew that this one witness, because of his unquestioned standing in the community, was more credible than his twenty witnesses. He knew that Finister Chardon was lying. But how could he prove it?

Gillian was fully aware of what was going on in Mr. Yistle's mind.

"Your honor," said Gillian sharply, "I object to the bulldozing tactics being employed by the district attorney. The witness has amply proved that he is an expert observer."

"He has not proved it to my satisfaction!" declared Yistle.

"Then," said Gillian quickly, "let's give him a test. Mr. Chardon," he said before Mr. Yistle could cut in, "we want to give your powers of observation an impromptu test. You claim, do you, that you never miss a detail of any scene?"

The witness smiled deploringly. "I would not go so far as that, Mr. Hazeltine. I am not infallible."

"Tell us," snapped Gillian, "everything you saw when you walked into the courthouse this morning. But first —are you a frequent visitor of the courthouse?"

"No, Mr. Hazeltine; this is my first visit here in three or four years. Let me think. I will begin with the courthouse doors." Mr. Chardon began with the courthouse doors. He described them in infinite detail, their ornate bronze handles, their protruding bronze hinges, their bronze filigree panels. He described the entrance hall, the doors leading from it, the legends painted on these doors, the bulletin board, and the announcements on the bulletin board. Step by step, detail by detail, he described his progress into the courthouse.

It took him a full half hour. Long before he had finished, the eyes of the jurymen were full of wonderment. It was an amazing demonstration of the powers of observation. And it had taken Finister Chardon an entire week of evenings to memorize this list of details which Gillian had supplied him!

When he had finished, Mr. Yistle said in a venomous low voice to Gillian: "That was a clever trick, but it was a circus trick." And to Judge Barlow: "Your honor, may I recall some witnesses? I wish to reopen their testimony on certain points this witness has raised."

"Is this witness excused?"

"Yes, your honor."

"He may wait," said Gillian, "for further examination."

Mr. Yistle recalled Mike Flaherty, the policeman who had made the arrest. He recalled other witnesses. They stuck to their stories. Gillian then recalled Finister Chardon. He stuck to his story. It seemed that a deadlock had been reached. Then Gillian put Kitty Kelly on the stand.

THE widow of Jake Mullin, dressed in black, went slowly to the stand. Her face was covered by a heavy black veil which she did not raise until she was seated. And when she raised it, the court room gasped.

Kitty Kelly was beautiful, and this was the beauty of infinite sadness. She was a Madonna. Her large lovely blue eyes gazed sadly, almost reproachfully, at the jury.

Her voice was sad, but it was sweet and clear. She spoke slowly but without hesitation.

"I want you to tell me," said Gillian gently, "the story of Timothy Bunce. I want you to spare no details, Kitty."

The girl told the story. She told it simply; of Tim's courtship, of her discovery that he had in him the makings

of a great fighter. She told of her meeting Jake Mullin, and of the bullying tactics her father and brothers had employed to force her to marry him. She described Mullin's meanness and his brutality.

When Mr. Yistle tried to interrupt, the jury glared at him. Even the judge glared at him. Gillian plied his questions skillfully. He presently set an example and pulled out a large white linen handkerchief with which he dabbed at his eyes. Three men on the jury presently produced handkerchiefs. And the tragic story went on. All through the court room could be heard the nervous clearing of throats. The sad voice said in conclusion:

"I am not sorry that Jake Mullin is dead. He met his death justly." She stopped.

Gillian said huskily: "That will be all. Thank you, Kitty."

Mr. Yistle, who had seen, in this girl's appealing sadness, his efforts wiped away, leaped to his feet and cried:

"It's true, isn't it, that you are still in love with this—this red-handed murderer?"

And the blue-eyed girl said simply: "Of course it's true. I love Tim. I will always love him. He is the only man I could ever love."

"Yes, yes, yes!" snarled the district attorney. "And it's true, isn't it, that you would lie yourself black in the face to save him from the electric chair?"

"Of course I would lie, if it would save him," Kitty Kelly answered in that sweet, sad voice that Gillian had worked so hard with her to perfect. "But I haven't had to lie." She stretched out her hands in a quick little appealing gesture. "Who wants poor Tim to die—do you?"

The court room broke into an uproar. That faltering little question was Gillian's master stroke. How many times had he rehearsed Kitty in delivering that faltering little question, with just the proper accent, with that pathetic lowering of the eyes when it had been said? Kitty had been a difficult subject. She had wanted to go on the witness stand and fight for Tim.

Mr. Yistle sat down. He was trying to discuss the crumbling of their case with Mr. Bullock. Mr. Bullock was evidently devoid of ideas.

"The defence rests!"

Mr. Yistle was too angry to talk coherently to the jury. He tried. He could only sputter. Gillian, in his address, spoke feelingly of the great love that existed between these two splendid young people: "A love that would last beyond the electric chair, if you could find it in your hearts to send this splendid young man to such a doom—a love that would last beyond the grave."

It was once said of Gillian that he could play upon the emotions of a jury just as Kreisler plays upon the violin. That afternoon, certainly, he demonstrated his greatness as a jury lawyer.

Mr. Yistle, in his closing argument, begged, entreated, implored, commanded the jury to keep their heads; to apply logic to this situation, not mawkish sentimentality. But their minds seemed to wander.

The jury was out ten minutes. When they returned with a verdict, the foreman announced it in a voice that rang with triumph.

"How say you?"

"*Not guilty!*"

MR. YISTLE—a pale, thoroughly infuriated Mr. Yistle — came striding over to Gillian.

"You are," he snapped, "a disgrace to your profession!"

"Who won this case?" Gillian calmly returned.

"That is not the point! You got this man, this red-handed murderer off, with lying and pettifoggery and chicanery. Chardon was lying. Tell me he wasn't lying, damn you! You had something on him! You forced him to take the stand and lie. Tell me you aren't a blackmailer!"

"I wouldn't dream of it," said Gillian.

"And that girl," Mr. Yistle panted, "now that you've taught her how to act, why don't you put her on the stage?"

"Her husband might object," said Gillian. And in answer to Mr. Yistle's expression of pained bewilderment which had joined his expression of baffled fury, Gillian said: "You see, Bert, the newspaper boys have been mighty generous to me. I wanted them to have a nice meaty piece of news for their afternoon editions—to sweeten up the news of the verdict. So I staged a marriage back in the jail during the noon recess."

Gillian turned his muscular back on the district attorney. Battling Bunce was busily shaking hands. Under his left arm was clamped the book of press clippings which Gillian's secretary had carefully compiled and which Gillian had given the young man early this morning. On the cover of the book was neatly stamped, in gold, the title:

A Punch Like the Kick of a Horse!

"Come with me," said Gillian. "We have an important engagement. Kitty is waiting in my car. Let's get out of here."

During the ride to Gillian's office, Battling Bunce said not a word. He held his wife's hand tightly and gazed raptly at the back of the chauffeur's neck. That amazing volume entitled "A Punch Like the Kick of a Horse!" he held tightly in his other hand.

In Gillian's private office, Paddy Tobin and another man were waiting. The other man was Frankie Walsh, heir presumptive to the light heavyweight throne; a superior young man with large white teeth, a hard grin, and the shoulders of a bull. He was sprawled in a chair and he did not arise.

Gillian closed the door and said: "Well, Paddy?"

Frankie Walsh spoke before Paddy could part his lips.

"It's a lot of hooey," he stated "I'll fight Tim, because the sport writers all over the country have gone cuckoo over this 'punch like the kick of a horse.' It 'll draw a big gate, but there won't be no fight."

"No?" said Battling Bunce. "How do you figure that out, Frankie?"

"How? Because you ain't got a punch. I saw you with Kid Murphy. I don't know how you killed Jake Mullin, but it wasn't with any punch—unless you had a horseshoe in that hand."

"Do you hear him, Paddy?" demanded Battling Bunce.

"Sure, Tim. You go right on talking to him."

"I'll talk to him!" snapped the Battler. "So you think I haven't got a punch, do you? Well, lemme tell you something, Big Boy. I have a punch like the kick of a horse—and I don't need any horseshoe. I have got the greatest punch that ever went into any ring."

"Is that so?" said Gillian mildly.

"You bet it's so! I've got a greater punch than Jack Dempsey ever had! I'll take you, Walsh, in just one round. I used to think all my knock-outs were

accidents. I even thought that that punch that killed Mullin was an accident. I know better now. I have probably the greatest punch in history. And when I meet you, Walsh, I'll prove it. Will I, Paddy?"

"You sure will, kid."

THE backing up of that promise is, of course, history. Gillian and Vee Hazeltine journeyed to New York to occupy first row ringside seats at the brief but exciting encounter which placed the light heavyweight crown upon the very immodest head of Battling Bunce. They saw Battling Bunce, a human tiger, leap from his corner when the bell rang for that historic first round. They saw him batter Frankie Walsh about the ring with terrific punches until Frankie Walsh collapsed, unconscious—with half of the round still to go!

And in his dressing room later, Gillian experienced sensations not unlike those which Frankenstein suffered when the monster he had created became uncontrollable.

"Well, Mr. Hazeltine, did I show that palooka whether I have a punch or not? Did I show that crowd that I have a punch like the kick of a horse?"

"You did," Gillian agreed.

"Did I show the world that I have the greatest punch that ever went into the ring?"

"I guess you did, Tim."

"I'll take 'em all," stated the Battler. "I only wish Dempsey was in his prime. I only wish Tunney would come back. In another year or so, I will be in the heavyweight division. Watch my dust!"

Later that evening, Gillian had a word with Kitty Kelly Bunce alone. The change in her was startling. The Madonna of the witness stand had become a bright-cheeked, merry-eyed girl. She was happy, but she was troubled.

"I don't mind it, Mr. Hazeltine," she said. "Tim is good, and I'm glad he's cured of his modesty, and knows he's good. But sometimes I get a little tired hearing about it. Have you—have you a cure for boastfulness?"

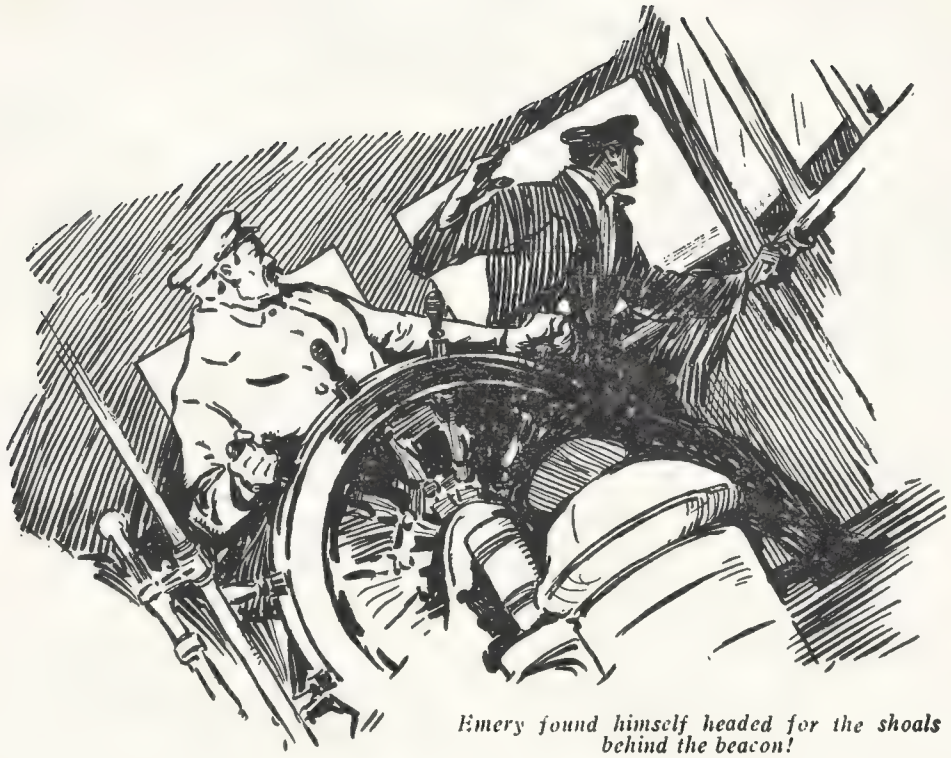
THE END.

The Black Maria

IN these days of whoopee parties the Black Maria—slang for police patrol wagon—still holds its place as a needed adjunct to the well equipped police station. The first Black Maria, from whom the name originated, was a gigantic negress who kept a sailors' boarding house in Boston in Colonial days.

Maria Lee's assistance often was solicited by the Boston authorities in keeping the peace, as the entire lawless element of that water front locality stood in awe of her. Whenever a policeman's prisoner proved too unruly on the march to the police station, the services of Black Maria were required. Her fame spread when, without assistance, she took three riotous sailors to the lock-up. Her services were sought so frequently that the expression, "Send for Black Maria," soon became synonymous with "take this prisoner to jail."

Chic Levere.



Emery found himself headed for the shoals behind the beacon!

First In

Business has its romance, and even steam-driven colliers share the racing spirit of the old clipper ships as young Captain Emery fights his way along the Atlantic coast

By BERTON E. COOK

THE entire Portland water front knew about it. Wherever seagoing down-Easters gathered to smoke and gossip, it was the chief topic of conversation. The Montaup was going to race the Isaac M. Hoegg, better known as the "Ike;" and the stake for the owners of the winning collier was a big, juicy, twelve-month contract for transporting gas coal from Curtis Bay, just out of Baltimore, to East Boston.

Mr. Waterman clicked his belt buckle up against the window sill in the wharfward end of his ship chandlery. He it was who supplied stores to all of the colliers entering the harbor of Portland, Maine, and his paunch had expanded with the business. Moreover, the chandler was "on the inside" in shipping gossip and his was the joy of the narrator.

"See them two colliers dischargin' over there at Allison's coal wharf? The nearest one's the Isaac M. Hoegg. She's just gone under the dippers. T'other one's the Montaup. She beat the Ike three hours to the wharf."

The groceries drummer remarked nothing unusual, and the chandler went on:

"Them two black ships are gonna race outa here. The one that gets to Curtis Bay, Baltimore, and loads gas coal, and gets it back and under the Mercury Beehive Gas and Coke Company's dippers in East Boston—gets it there first, mind yer—she gets the big Mercury contract for next year."

"S'posin' both ships get into that wharf in the night when there's nobody to take the lines from one or the other? Which one gets the contract?" queried the drummer.

"No use supposin'. There's room for only one ship to discharge coal at that Mercury plant's pier, and that's right across the end of it. The first ship that gets under their unloadin' apparatus lands the contract, tha's all.

"Now Captain Rand here, he sez the' ain't no race to it. He allows that the Montaup ain't got a look-in."

"That Ike Hoegg's the fastest coal boat on the coast," bellowed the captain, joining the group. "Ever since Captain Olden took her off the ways brand new, some four years ago, she's easily been the fastest carrier in the business. The Montaup, she's never made time—what's more, I hear they've got a new skipper aboard of her lately, a young feller that just got his papers a short time ago!"

"Aye," Waterman agreed slowly. "Old Captain Jim Emery's boy, Garwood. You knew Cap'n Jim—the one that run that five-master, the Manchester, for years!"

"Don't say!" exclaimed Captain Rand. "Well, if the youngster's anything like the old man, I'd like to see him win out—Jim's boy, eh? Damn it, I wish he could beat that Olden feller! I ain't got no use for Olden. He's a skunk!"

"Nobody'll argue that point ag'in' yer," Waterman chimed in. "Listen, cap'n. You and I don't know what that Montaup'll do. Old Cap'n Trott allus run her till this Garwood Emery got her, and everybody knows what a slow-poke Trott was. This lad's cut to a different pattern. He's young—lots o' pep. Well, here's luck to him."

SO ran the gossip while the two colliers discharged their cargoes. In the foggy dawn of that morning, both ships had entered Portland harbor.

The Hoegg had gone to anchor down off Casco Island, while the Montaup's young skipper had taken a chance on finding an empty berth at the wharf, and had gone on up to get it before some other claimant could tie up there.

As the morning advanced, Captain Garwood Emery, along with others, had wondered what kept his rival at anchor down below, but when the fog scaled at ten o'clock, it disclosed the Hoegg, still at anchor with her nose stuck on the mud flats, waiting for high tide to float her off.

About ten thirty the tide released her, and up she came to unload at the upper side of the wharf where the Montaup was. The minute she brushed the pilings, Captain Olden leaped onto the wharf, looking like a thunder cloud. With characteristic brusqueness, he pushed his way through the onlookers there, demanding to know where this young Emery was, anyway.

"You're master o' that Montaup over there on the other side?" he blurted without a shred of civility on finding the man he sought.

Puzzled for the moment, Emery turned to see a long, drooping mustache and a pair of angry gray eyes.

"I am Captain Emery," said he pleasantly, "and you're Captain Olden, I suppose?" Then he extended his hand.

Olden bluntly ignored the gesture.

"S'pose you're tickled as hell, ain't yer? My ship held up on the mud while you get a three hours' lead on us dischargin'!"

Emery silently watched the dippers rise and fall over his hatches.

"Damned fog! Hung up down there till high water!" Olden yapped.

"Sure was a tough break for you, cap'n. You ought to get away from here three hours after we leave, though. Only a few hours' difference after all."

"Few hours!" Olden blustered. "That's miles of a lead you're gonna git on us, you young pup, an' you know it! You're gonna git to sea to-night, you are; we're here till some time to-morrer mornin'. Talk about a race; the' ain't nothin' to it, now. We're 's good 's out of it."

"It does sorter give us the drop on you, but that's all in the game. Might have been my ship instead o' yours. All in the game."

"Game!" snorted Olden; then: "All right, take it! You're gonna need it! We'll go in by Cape Charles ahead o' your old creepin' misery of a scow even so!"

With that out of his system, Olden stomped off.

"Here!" shouted Emery above the clatter of machinery overhead. "I'm gonna make this a real race. I'm gonna hold the Montaup at anchor down the harbor until you're ready for sea. Then both ships'll leave Portland at the same time. Get that? I've got to take on my stores. They'll come aboard to-morrow morning while we're waiting for you. Now you fellows get a move on and get your supplies while you're here at the wharf; then when you're discharged, you'll be ready to start along with us."

A crooked little smile flitted across Olden's face; but he said nothing.

"And, Cap'n Olden, we'll take on our consignment at Curtis Bay and beat your Ike Hoegg to that East Boston pier if we have to drive the bottom clean out of the Montaup to do it! Put that in your ol' dudeen and drag on it!"

Olden spat, then shifted his quid in a ruminative sort of way.

"Humph!" he grunted, and strode off up the wharf.

Emery watched the man slouch out of sight. Had he been too generous? Overstepped the bounds of his rights and obligations to the Montaup's owners? It might cost him his command. Owners hot on the trail of new contracts aren't likely to see the sporting features of a race like this. The contract's the thing with them.

"Confound it!" he exclaimed. "But that rascal got under my hide."

TOWARD night the Montaup's coal was unloaded and she slacked off her lines to go below to anchor. Captain Emery handed Waterman his list of supplies.

"To-morrow morning early, you say?" Waterman commented. "Cap'n, you'd 'a' been wiser to give me this list this morning, if I might venture to say so. I'd 'a' had your stores aboard of yer by now. Olden's got his on a'ready."

"Sure, but he can't get away from here till the middle o' the morning to-morrow. We're going to sea together.

O' course, I'm not saying we're certain to beat him to Boston at that, but—"

"Well, you know your business better 'n any one else, but that's a damsite more 'n he'd 'a' done for you," and the chandler shook his head dubiously.

Below Casco Island that night, the clang of tools on machinery rang throughout the Montaup. Chief Le Blanc and his assistant engineers, foregoing the usual routine of anchor watches, were putting the ship's power plant in shape for the coming strain.

After a restless night, Captain Garwood Emery turned out early and went on deck. Nothing rippled the glassy surface of the long harbor. Like a pale, blue mirror, it lay quiescent all around him.

By seven o'clock, he was impatient to up anchor and be gone. Always, he watched for that chandler's boat. Then the tide turned from high to ebb. The Montaup's stern swung slowly outward, offering a better view of Allison's wharf and the Hoegg's berth at the farther side.

Emery went aft. In the course of his vigil, he happened to glance up the harbor to the wharf. The Isaac M. Hoegg was gone!

He was still trying to figure it out when Waterman hailed him from the deck of one of his small boats, coming with the Montaup's supplies.

"Olden's beat it out on yer!" the chandler yelled. "He got 'em to work overtime last night, gettin' the coal outer her. Left around three o'clock this mornin'!"

Be it to his everlasting credit, Garwood Emery said not a word—his mates and Chief Le Blanc said it all for him.

An hour later, well out to sea, Captain Emery paced the bridge.

"The cussed sneak!" he muttered to his first officer. "But do you know, Mr. Simpson, by the way this old girl's cutting the water right now, she'll be overhauling him and his blasted Hoegg 'fore they make the mouth of Chesapeake Bay!"

Simpson shook his head dubiously, then turned the ship over to Mr. Cawley for the eight to twelve watch and went below to his room.

That was Wednesday morning. The July sun shone on a smooth sea—perfect conditions for the collier and her struggle.

When night fell, the sun was down behind a flourish of ostrich plumes. An east wind, raw and heavy, soughed through the shrouds; motion was in the sea with the urge of strong forces somewhere behind it.

Out by the western end of Block Island, off the Rhode Island coast, Captain Emery swept the distant horizon in vain for an inkling of anything that might be the Isaac M. Hoegg. Not a light.

Throughout the early morning run down the south side of Long Island, he kept up the search until, just beyond the red sides of Fire Island Lightship, there she was, away off on the course ahead. Only by the aid of the binoculars could he even glimpse her, and at that he was not positive that it was the Ike. For the storm was coming on apace and in the seas that came in its van, that distant blurr of reeling masts in a quartering sea seemed more like a phantom that harked back to the days of the Flying Dutchman.

RUNNING down to the Barnegat beacon off the Jersey coast, the Montaup stood at an angle to her rival, for the latter had already straightened out on the course to

Northeast End. Straight across water, this brought the two ships nearer together and Emery now saw beyond a doubt that it was the Hoegg he was following.

An hour after dinner Gar Emery watched Barnegat Light shrink over his ship's stern, a fine, snow-white needle set upon yellow sands in an atmosphere of gray. Right then the Ike seemed hopeless miles ahead.

But the Montaup was gaining every hour. Doggedly, persistently, with not a skip in the ceaseless thrum of her screw, she was crawling steadily up. To her listening crew, she sounded as though Le Blanc had instilled the fear of Allah into the driving thrust of her speeding pistons.

Mid afternoon—and Five Fathom Lightship, a lone, heaving beacon on a shoal, shelterless station. The sea was fiercer, sharper, and the Hoegg still held her lead relentlessly.

"A lead in a breeze is a lead while there's seas," Simpson quoted tritely, and everybody knew the truth of it too well to gainsay him. The Montaup could not be expected to make appreciable gains in this weather.

When the second night closed down upon the race, the barometer in the Montaup's wheelhouse read 29.42. Then the rain struck with a vengeance. Emery heard it clatter against the starboard side of the house like a carload of shingle nails, and mounting seas came tumbling aboard in deafening crashes.

Now the ship was heading for Winterquarter Lightship. Directly west of it, alee, lay a stretch of sand that would be out in a storm like this. The seas must be tumbling in suds there now. No ship could hope to live in that stretch between lightship and shore, for it was a graveyard in a gale. Whatever befell, the Montaup would have to pass outside Winterquarter on its eastern and weather side.

With this situation in mind, Emery considered his alternatives. He could head the ship out into deeper water, avoid the lightship altogether, and head back on an angular course that would bring him to the Cape Charles Lightship at the northern entrance of Chesapeake Bay; or he could run on as he was going, taking care to haul out on occasion to keep clear of the lee shore.

The angular course was safer. The straighter one was shorter. It was a question—and a race. What was Olden doing?

With the shields drawn out over the ends of his marine glasses, he went out into the storm and swept the horizon, or rather the darkness where horizon ought to be. First to starboard, then ahead, finally to port. Nothing in sight. Suddenly the forward end of the ship rose. Up, up, up it went, to the snarling crest of a towering sea. Seconds it hung suspended, trembling and squeaking aloft—ah, there she was! Four points off the port bow—only her masthead lights showing, slatting unmercifully. South southeast those lights were ranging, as nearly as he could estimate. The Ike was headed out on that angular, longer course in deep water!

An instant only Emery considered. The next he was slamming the door to the wheelhouse on the inside.

"Steer sou'west, half west," he ordered. "Olden's gone outside. Must be headed about south in the trough, the way he's slatting around out there. Good enough! The farther out he goes, the better; he'll have to come all the way back. We'll hold to our straight course along the shore and gain on him."

Along this stretch of coast, there are places where soundings will show only fifteen to seventeen fathoms; and the seas were running long, narrow and very high. Solid ridges of water thundered down upon the fighting collier's battened hatches in an unbroken diapason of booms and bangs that forced Emery to work her out a full point before that pounding could bash something in or drive her ashore.

AT eleven thirty-four Winterquarter Lightship hove in sight, a bounding, thrashing cluster of lamps that gleamed and went out spasmodically among the waves. Now it was a streak across the jet night, now a downward flash that ended somewhere beneath wind-torn crests.

The flashes were on his left—they were showing over the Montaup's port bow instead of her starboard. Emery found himself headed for the shoals behind the beacon!

"Out! Haul out!" he commanded.

The collier wallowed in the long troughs. Over rolled her mastheads at a fearsome angle for a ship in water ballast. A maelstrom churned the length of her weather rails.

"Southeast!" Emery shouted.

Into it she bucked and dived—but she cleared the lightship.

Next morning the storm was gone as quickly as it had come. So runs the summer weather on the Atlantic seaboard.

In the baffling lights and shadows between dawn and sun-up, grotesque shadows swept over the entrance to Chesapeake Bay. They made visibility uncertain, but not for Mr. Torphy, the third officer.

"There she goes!" he cried, pointing out ahead.

Captain Emery jumped as though shot. He followed his officer's gaze. In the changing light, he made out a tiny, black stern and a white wake and a dense, jet-black belch of soft coal smoke over all. Through marine glasses, he studied it. It was Olden's Ike.

"Damn 'er!" muttered Torphy fervently

Emery said nothing. He knew a thing or two that his third mate had yet to learn. During the last two years, he had noticed that the Hoegg was making most of her speed on the runs down the coast in ballast. On the trips north, when she was loaded deep, her time was not so much better than that of several other coal carriers. Therefore Emery figured that if only he could get the Montaup loaded and out of Curtis Bay as soon as Olden got away, his own chances to win the race ought to be good.

"Well, cap'n," Torphy yawned, "this won't buy the kids shoes," and he went below to breakfast.

All the way up the bay that day the two black ships scurried to get the first chance to load.

Just before six, that night, the Montaup drew in close upon the Ike's port quarter. By dint of sheer driving throughout the long day's run, she had cut down Olden's lead. Now there remained only the length of the Hoegg before the ships would be bow to bow—and now, too, they were entering Curtis Bay. Both skippers had used their binoculars, both had spotted that one, unoccupied berth at the long, loading pier beside which they had to tie up to load.

Aboard the Montaup, Le Blanc threw the throttle wide open for a final, short spurt to that berth. Aboard the Ike, Olden's German engineer did likewise. The Ike won out.

Speeding straight to the wharf, Olden made a bee line to the gap between a barge and another collier. Then, without warning, his ship lay in a cream of lather, engines reversed, stern pumping up and down, and the Ike came to a stop abreast of the open space. Lines flew in long arcs from ship to shore. Hawser eyes trailed over the water on the ends of them and the Ike was in.

Promptly at seven o'clock next morning, whole carloads of gas coal would start pounding into her hatches while the Montaup would have to lie at anchor until some other craft pulled out from some other space.

It was nine thirty next morning before the Montaup's chance came. A two-masted schooner was towed away from the other side of the pier and Emery hustled into her place before the loading gear had time to cool. Two and a half hours behind the Ike.

Moored at last, Gar Emery turned in for a much needed rest, leaving Mr. Simpson, the first, in charge.

Scarcely had the captain's door closed when onto the wharf went Torphy with a chip on his shoulder.

Back he came in jig time. Some officer off the Hoegg had boasted once too often about slipping out of Portland in the night. Certain minions of the law had intervened between flying fists and a soon-to-be blue-black eye. The fists were returning to the ship last docked, the discolored eye to the Ike. But the Hoegg had gained her two and a half hours of loading time.

Came mid afternoon and the Ike backing out with her hatches full.

"We'll tell 'em you're comin'!" yelled one of the Hoegg's crew.

"Hey!" another put in, "s'posin' we heave an orange overboard now an' then so's you slow-pokes kin folly us!"

"'Pon my soul, mates, if there ain't that Montaup we left up in Portland, Maine!" That was Olden's strident voice.

Again Gar Emery let his crew do the talking; but he did wonder to what extent a ship's master could hoot and cat-call with his men and still get discipline out of them when emergencies came.

ON the run down Chesapeake Bay that night, every officer aboard the Montaup kept a ceaseless watch for the Ike. Every possible rig and range of running lights out beyond went under their closest scrutiny.

To be sure, the Hoegg had made a good two hours' start, and it was equally certain that Olden was making the most of the advantage, but now the Montaup was outdoing herself. For once, she was in excellent trim on an even keel. The cargo, though a light grade of gas coal, had sunk her screw deep in and the bronze blades were spinning the water from under her as they had never done it before. She was making the best time in her career; and she dearly needed it.

Cape Henry stood abeam just twelve hours and three minutes after she cleared from Curtis Bay. That was a good half hour better than even grim and grimy Chief Engineer Le Blanc had expected of the Montaup, as, throughout the busy night, he had stood watching constantly over those clipping pistons like a worried mother watching a croupy infant.

Then it was the Charles Lightship abeam, and still no sign of the Hoegg.

When the Montaup was off Hog Island—well off—Captain Emery reached for the glasses in their box under the windows in the wheelhouse. There was a black smudge far out

ahead, apparently on the same course as the Montaup—aye, there she was! That was her stern with the port lifeboat higher than the one on the other side. Olden was making hay all right.

At the buff-colored Winterquarter Lightship that they had so recently left in a smother of yeast-white seas, there could be no inkling of doubt about its being the Ike. The Montaup had come up so fast and near that her black and white details were visible to the naked eye, provided it was a good one.

"Now, Mr. Cawley," said Captain Emery to the second officer when the lightship stood directly abeam, "we'll let the Ike run on up the coast if she wants to go that way. We'll put across for Gay Head. The course is nor'east, three-quarters east."

"Nor'east, three-quarters east," replied the second officer and the helmsman ported his helm for the change. Slowly the ship swung to starboard and headed for Martha's Vineyard, off Massachusetts.

By and by, the ship out ahead swung until she showed the Montaup her starboard side. More than one pair of eyes detected it the instant it happened and in precious few minutes, the Montaup's whole crew knew that the skipper of the Ike had observed his rival so closely that he had caught onto Captain Emery's plan to cut across to Gay Head, and was now on the same course himself.

That twenty-three hour run to the western entrance to the Vineyard will always lodge in Garwood Emery's memory. Throughout the long afternoon, the sturdy Montaup, for all her fifteen years in the business of delivering coal, thrummed and plodded and plowed her persistent way uptide in the poetic mystery of a sultry haze.

All through the long, starlit watches of the night, hopeful eyes on her fo'c's'le ahead, on the bridge, and at her rails just outside the fo'c's'le sharpened to note the slightest indication that the Montaup was stalking in upon her competitor. Firemen dripping sweat, with sooty towels slung around their blackened necks, stumbled wearily up the greasy, iron ladders from their slavery to get just one encouraging glimpse of the Ike out ahead.

Sailors passed up their cherished "watch below" in order to keep a close eye out. Even Mr. Torphy, the third mate, refused to close his eyes lest the act itself prove a Jonah on this critical leg of the run home.

"Sure," he explained, "an' anything might be a Jonah to us in this bloomin' racket!"

At every bell, now, the helmsman ran aft to read the log on the taffrail; and before he could return forward to make his report of the half hour's run, men from the black gang got the news out of him and relayed it down below where the real heat of the battle was raging.

As for Captain Garwood Emery, so must Lief the Lucky have thrilled when, centuries before Columbus, he came scudding down from his icy haunts upon this same Vineyard.

To every man on the Montaup's articles, it was a battle—a fierce uphill grind against the one collier whose sneering boasts of record runs had become common talk throughout the coal trade to New England ports.

THE Montaup was creeping up; but so slowly! Every bell that sounded in the wheelhouse clock rang up a gain. Every hour showed that the Ike's range lights were getting brighter that long night.

A huge, smoldering red sun crawled up over Nantucket almost before Captain Emery realized it, and in its long, slanting beams, he saw that the Ike's lead had been cut to a mere two miles.

At breakfast time, the watch below gobbled their oats and whatever else could not be eaten on deck and went up with oranges in their hands.

"Lookit!" one sailor called. "Spike's savin' his fruit."

"Sure," Spike retorted. "That's goin' over the stern soon as we get by, for them hellions to folly *us* by."

It was exactly ten forty-two when the Isaac M. Hoegg rounded the buoy off Gay Head. The Montaup made it at ten forty-six.

In minutes only, the Montaup overhauled her rival. Moved up abreast her starboard side, and clung there like a miser to money.

It was Mr. Cawley's watch once more, and he stood there in the wind on the bridge, all a-sweat over the prospect of running the ship up the Vineyard in a race as snug as this already was.

"Whatever we do," Captain Emery warned him, "we'll keep plenty clear of that ship and stay always off his starboard side."

"Yes, sir," Cawley answered in a voice that was anxiety itself.

But Captain Gar knew just how the man felt. In his quartermastering days—and nights—he had seen his skipper empty a revolver in the general direction of another ship's pilothouse right in this same Vineyard, when a race was going against him.

Then, too, there was the situation that he and Cawley found themselves in. During the long tussle up to Gay Head at the west end of Martha's Vineyard, Emery had gauged his ship's speed, plotted her run and time on a chart, and anticipated precisely what was now taking place. Keen, alert skipper that he was, Emery had expected to come up with the Ike right here.

Now they were off on the course inside the island, to Nobsque—and the Montaup stood to pass the Ike right there because the Montaup would be on the inside of the starboard turn when both ships swung down for the run by Handkerchief to Crossrip. Then, once he got that lead on Olden, he would hold it to Crossrip, for the ship in the lead at that point would be the leader over the Shoals.

"Over the shoals clear to Pollock Rip?" asked Cawley.

"Yes," answered Emery. "Neither one of us would attempt to pass the other going over the shoals. Too cussed narrow a channel at low water—it 'll be pretty near low water when we get there—and, besides, we're both pretty deep. Can't make time in shoal water anyway. The screw just heaves her stern up and down without getting her anywhere."

"That's right, too," assented Cawley, a bit dazed by it all.

Nobsque went by on the left at eleven fifty-one for both ships.

"Now!" cried Emery, and Cawley himself brought the collier's nose around to the right.

"Careful!" Emery cautioned. "Off there to starboard there's a long sand bar that runs along parallel with our course for quite a piece. Not too far over—steady as you are!"

Out ahead, pretty well this side of Handkerchief Lightship, a big ocean tramp was bearing down on the two colliers. Sampson masts and all were showing full and clear. Now what the devil?

Toot — toot — toot — too-oo-oot!

came the danger whistle from that oncoming freighter.

THE two coal ships were still running side by side. It was too narrow a channel to expect that ship to crowd by. Yet she was entitled to a right of way through this bottle-neck. One of the colliers must drop astern of the other to make room for her passage on through. The Ike was on the Montaup's port. It was therefore the Ike's business to slack off and let the big freighter through safely.

Anxiously, Emery watched her bear down upon them. He looked at the lighthouse of West Chop, then at the Ike on the other side. By his bearings he knew he could not work any farther to starboard without—

Whoof! Whoof! Whoof! came the panicky blasts again from the ship out ahead. And she wasn't so far ahead, at that!

"Good Lord!" Emery cried, running hot-foot to the port end of his bridge. What the devil ailed Olden now? Why hadn't he slowed down long ago when there was plenty of time? Damned bull-head! He had no rights here—no Board would uphold him in God's world if he got into a—

"Drop astern there!" came Olden's flat voice. "Ahoy! Aboard the Montaup there! Git out of the way there or we'll shove yer out!"

Emery grabbed up the megaphone.

"Drop back yourself!" he shouted back. "Our right o' way here!"

"Way be damned!" roared Olden. "Slack off or we'll—"

Whoof! Whoof! Whoof! Whoof! Whoof!

This time the whistle sounded as if it were right over the two colliers, the freighter was that close upon them. Her huge bows loomed up black and high. Her hawse pipes were all plain, even the men above, and she was boring mercilessly down upon the Isaac M. Hoegg, for it was the Ike who stood in her way.

Then the Ike came closer. She was swinging in on the Montaup. Another minute and there would be a suction and a crash!

"Hell!" growled Emery, and leaped to the signal levers. They jingled as though the great god Pan were at them. "Full speed astern!" they demanded.

In a welter of white foam the Montaup thrashed her way back. The Ike came on over onto the Montaup's course, and Captain Olden had succeeded in another scurvy trick to get the lead.

That afternoon the Montaup trailed her rival all the winding way over Pollock Rip Shoals.

From the Ike's stern, men waved towels, shirts—anything that would show their derision. One of them grinningly threw orange skins over the taffrail.

Aboard the Montaup, men cursed and growled and devised heinous plans of revenge, once the ships got in—and took their licking grimly.

Captain Emery said nothing. Instead, he chewed away a pocketful of the blackest cigars aboard. Taken by and large, this was the wretchedest Monday he had ever known. One minute, he cursed himself for an ass. What sense was there in pitting straight, clean seamanship against a ruthless, lawless hellion like Olden!

At times he almost suspected the old Montaup herself for an unlucky ship—one of those Jonahs that stick on the ways when everything is ready for their launching.

Or was he himself the fly in the soup? He had come up from the sujee buckets, in a steady, unbroken climb. Was this destined to be his knock-out, this race with Olden and his highly touted Ike?

Then he exploded in wrath at his momentary weakness. Now he was thinking straight. He considered the possible power, the utmost speed that Le Blanc might be able to squeeze out of the ship on a three-hour fight for the last chance to get into East Boston first. Then he went aft and engaged his chief engineer in weighty conversation. And when it was done, Le Blanc went below to his machinery with dire vengeance in his fists for that "bonehead Dutchmun what go chief in ze Ike."

IT was all of six o'clock that night when the Montaup rounded the busy end of Cape Cod. Five, no, six miles ahead went the stern of the Ike, and she was going like blue blazes, moving at a tremendous pace for her or any other coal packet then on the coast. She led by six good, long miles it was, and most of it had been gained while Le Blanc and his crew had been doing something or other away down below, to make one supreme effort to put the Montaup on the map by making time against the Ike.

"Anything, chief; do anything that will get us in ahead, no matter if we have to lay by for a whole week to effect repairs on 'er." So Emery had told his chief; and the Frenchman had been working for all of an hour—and falling off in the race meantime. In fact, the Ike was more in the lead now than she had been at any time since the long grind to Gay Head.

Suddenly a new note became audible aboard the Montaup. Men cocked their ears to catch it. Firemen looked overside at the rushing water, then questioningly at their chief who stood close by. But Chief Le Blanc offered no explanation at all. An oiler winked to the fireman waiting to go on dog watch.

The *thud, thud, thud* of the screw, its quickened pace, the response of the ship to it—all of the new effort of the Montaup registered upon his trained ear.

Bounding out of his bunk, Cawley hustled up to Emery on the bridge.

"What's the matter?" he cried.

"Matter?" repeated Emery. "Matter? Why, Le Blanc has been figuring how much he could get out of this coal pusher, and here 'tis! Hear it? Feel it? He's got her wide open! And look at her overhaul the Hoegg!"

Like a race horse coming from behind on the last lap, the Montaup forged ahead. In the first dusk of evening, the after range light on the Ike's mainmast seemed to change perceptibly from a fine, shaking point of light to a lantern glow hung aloft.

At seven the difference between the ships was reckoned in miles. Now the clock in the wheel house tinkled off two bells—nine o'clock—and the good old Montaup was poking her lively nose to starboard of the Ike's throbbing stern.

Men on both ships watched the contest from their respective main decks. On the Montaup they waved and yelled for dear life and raw tonsils. But across a pretty narrow bit of water another crowd watched the Montaup's phenomenal and quite unexpected burst of speed with misgivings. They were the ones now to clench angry fists and shake them.

But look at the Montaup! Only a few minutes ago it had been her black

bow, plowing grimly on to get abreast the other ship's stern. Still coming up, that bow stood directly off the Ike's starboard lifeboat. A new belch of unfolding clouds of smoke from the Montaup's and the runner-up's bow was in line with the Ike's mainmast, then on to her foremast.

The Ike Hoegg made one grand spurt for the lead that would take her into Boston first. They must have arranged it, Olden and his chief, for the suds flew suddenly from her sternpost and her nose fairly shot ahead in the now darkened waters. Only the bone in her teeth stood forth larger and whiter in the moonlight.

True to his past performances, Olden hauled her viciously over onto the Montaup's course. If he could crowd Emery over, the Montaup would lose time. If he could force the Montaup into his wake, she would fall off. Olden was evidently in such straits that he'd do almost anything to put his speeding rival astern of him.

Not this time, however; not this time was he to succeed. That ruse would work along the side of a sand bar in the Vineyard, but not out here in the wide open water of Massachusetts Bay. Captain Garwood Emery never turned a hair from the course he was steering—and he was doing the steering right then.

"More!" he shouted, leaving the wheel for a moment to use the speaking tube to the engine room. "More!" and Le Blanc got it.

A new volume of smoke completely blanketed both ships in the lazy air. They ran out from under it. The bows poked out into the moonlight and the Montaup was ahead! Back in the van again—and this time to stay there.

Out of the fo'c's'le came three firemen. It was their off watch, but they went tearing aft to add their strength and skill to that of their overworked mates in front of the hot furnace doorways. A double crew was going to fire her in, to hold the lead for keeps.

Again the Montaup leaped ahead.

"Hooray!" some one yelled down on the Montaup's deck.

On went the Montaup—on and still on, gaining at every tick of her wheel house clock. She left the Ike in her fizzing wake, and it was Captain Olden who was forced to pull aside or drop farther astern.

Now the Graves, ghostly in the bluish light; now the glare of Boston Light off the other side. Still the Montaup gained on Olden.

Straight in by the lights she fled. Deer Island came abeam and Emery headed her nose for the coal pier of the Mercury Beehive company.

"Holy sufferin' mackerel!" shouted Torphy. "Them's the Ike's red and green lights just showin' back there round the far end of Deer Island!"

"We've got 'im! We've got the old boy!" rumbled Emery. "Mr. Simpson," he added, "the end of that pier is vacant for us! Get your lines ready. Get a man ashore to take them—lively!"

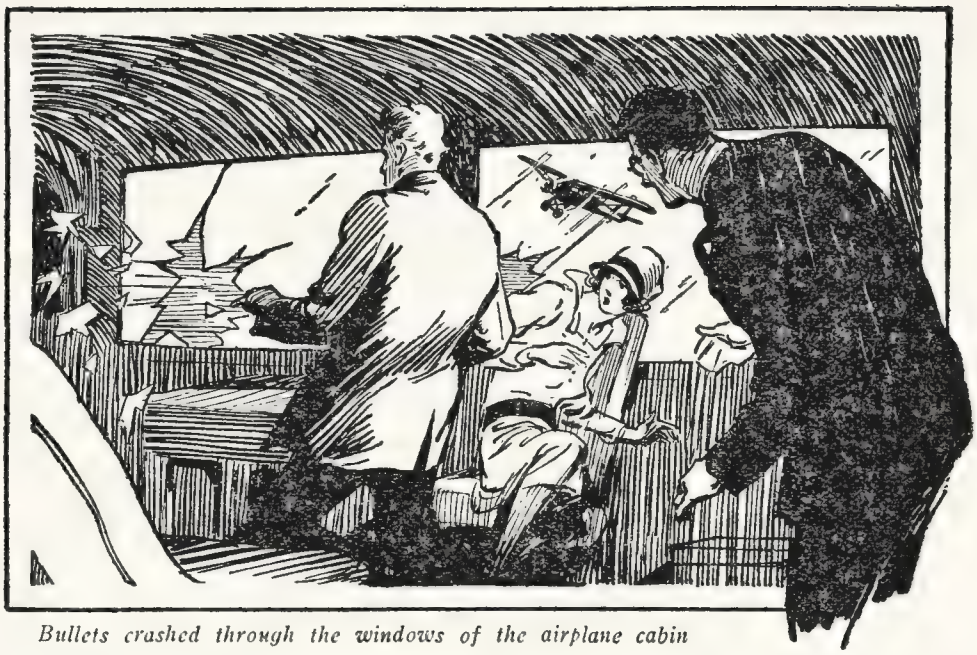
Later that evening the crash of chain clattering through a hawse pipe jarred on the subdued echoes off the water front of the Mercury Beehive Gas and Coke Company's pier. The Isaac M. Hoegg's port anchor was down.

In the reflected glow on the water a line of golden spheres drifted down on the tide to the anchored ship.

Captain Alpheus Olden took a second look at them.

"Oranges!" he growled, and slammed his door—from the inside.

THE END.



Bullets crashed through the windows of the airplane cabin

A Great Man's Shoes

Flung into the whirlpools of big business, Bill Robinson and his professor partner fight to keep from drowning as financial rivals viciously push them under

By FRED MacISAAC

Author of "Run, Dan, Run!" "The Mental Marvel," etc.

LEADING UP TO THIS INSTALLMENT

WILLIAM ROBINSON was twenty-seven when he inherited his kingdom, in 1931. A bomb hurled into his father's office had killed Robinson, senior, and his three partners, Jenks, Moore, and Evans.

Lewis Reach, the attorney of Robinson and Company, persuades Bill to carry on his father's policies, although every big financier will be fighting him, and in all probability he will end by losing everything. But, Reach says, the bomb explosion was not an anarchist outrage; he is sure that some of Robinson's business rivals, desperate, had put him and his partners out of the way to end their power. Hasty liquidation, or a trusteeship, would wreck the billion-dollar holding company and let the rivals win.

Bill determines to fight. Reach's warning that he can trust nobody is borne out when John Redding, Robinson's chief lieutenant, leaves the company to become president of the New York and Transcontinental Railroad. This is owned by Enoch Eastingham, Robinson's rival in the attempt to gain control of air and rail transportation.

Bill sends for a classmate, Irving R. Smith, now assistant professor in the Harvard School of Business Adminis-

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tration. He wants Smith to digest business reports and advise him on business fundamentals; he knows that decisions and policies must be his own. Smith, en route to New York, meets Margaret Eastingham, Enoch's niece.

Reach's belief about the authorship of the bomb outrage is borne out when police arrest a hired gangster.

John Redding tries to take his secretary, Jane Gregg, away from Robinson and Company, but finds her loyal; and he arouses her suspicions when he tries to get her to bring a personal letter file from his former office. She searches the file, and finds a memorandum from Robinson, senior, asking to have Sam Bates trailed while in New York.

Bill puts Blank's detective agency on the trail of Bates, a former stunt flyer who, despite his dubious record as a promoter, was retained as president of the Consolidated Express Airways when Robinson, senior, took it over. All correspondence about Bates was in Robinson's possession when the bomb destroyed him and it. Bates's presence in New York is explained by his courtship of Margaret.

A telegram for Robinson comes from Chester Lewton, airplane inventor, in a code which Jane Gregg recognizes as one Robinson and Redding used. The code book cannot be found, and Bill determines to fly to Michigan City, Indiana, to question Lewton.

CHAPTER XI.

ENEMIES AT SIGHT.

ROBINSON returned to his own office and seated himself at his desk. Upon pressing his buzzer, Miss Nevin entered, escorting Samuel Bates. He strode into the room confidently and approached the big boss with a cordial palm outstretched.

"Happened to be in town, Mr. Robinson," he said, "and I took the liberty of presenting myself. Knew you'd probably like to give me the once over."

Bill ignored pointedly the glad hand. If this man were concerned in the killing of his father he did not want to make the error of shaking hands with him.

"Glad to see you," he said stiffly. "Sit down, please."

The smile faded from the face of the visitor, who flushed a little and dropped into a chair beside the desk.

"You know, of course, that I am the president of Consolidated Airways," Bates said.

"Oh, yes. How is business?"

Bates crossed his legs, drew from his pocket a gold cigarette case, lifted eyebrows for permission, and lighted one with a gold pocket lighter.

"Fair, considering. Even now, it's impossible to make the American public realize that flying is as safe as motoring or riding in a train."

"They'll come to it, no doubt."

"Oh, sure. Only they are hard to educate. The average man will take to the air only when he is absolutely pressed for time, and then he does it nervously."

"What is your business in New York, Mr. Bates?" Bill asked coldly.

"Why—er—I had some private business. I run over every few weeks."

"You were here about the time my father and his partners were killed, I believe."

"Why, no, Mr. Robinson, I was here a few days before. I left the day before the awful thing happened."

"I understand you were dining with Eastingham last night."

"Why, er, yes. I happen to be great friends with his niece. I suppose the professor told you." Under his breath Bates added, "Damn him."

"I see. Of course Eastingham is not friendly to our company."

"I never discuss business with him. In fact he doesn't like me. He tolerates me because of Margaret."

"I haven't had the pleasure of meeting the young lady. I believe she is a friend of Mr. Smith's."

"Yeah." Bates was silent, busy sizing up the young man.

"Was there anything especial you wanted to talk to me about?" asked Bill. There was no reason why he should have disliked Bates except the prejudice he had against him because of what he knew of his record, but the fellow irked him, and Bates seemed to sense his animosity.

"Well, frankly, Mr. Robinson, I would like to have a free hand with Consolidated. We need twenty new planes. I advised your father to that effect, and he would 've given me permission to order them had he lived."

"Have you any reason to think so?"

"He as good as told me so. You see, I am an aviator of long experience and a business executive with a fine record, a rare combination in this game, as you may not know. Trouble with most air companies is the head is either an aviator who knows nothing about business or a business man who knows nothing about airplanes. I combine knowledge of both."

"HOW long have you been president of this company?" Bill asked.

"A little over a year."

"How much money have we made in that time?"

"Why, er, we're still a little in the red. As I explained, the public hasn't yet got the air habit, but without mail contracts we have to send out the planes whether we have passengers or not."

"Well, what exactly do you mean by a free hand?"

"Why, let me run the business without consulting the New York office. Give me *carte blanche*. Let me do as I see fit and be satisfied with the monthly operating statements."

Robinson smiled amusedly. "I'm afraid I don't know you well enough yet for that, Mr. Bates."

"But, look here, sir," said Bates angrily. "You're a young man, absolutely without business experience. What good would it do you to check me up?"

"Frankly, Mr. Bates, I don't think your past record justifies unbounded confidence in you," Bill said dryly.

The man's face grew dark. "What's the matter with my past record?"

"Really, Mr. Bates, I don't care to discuss it. I suggest you go back to Chicago and stick to your job. Your company has no business in New York which requires your presence here. If you need anything, wire us, and we'll attend to it for you."

Bates looked as though he wanted to make a hot rejoinder, but he thought better of it.

"Very well, sir," he said, rising. "I assure you that I arrange affairs so that business does not suffer from my absence."

"Nevertheless," said Robinson significantly.

"Oh, certainly, if that's an order."

"Please consider it so."

"Well, good day."

"Good-by, Mr. Bates."

When the door had closed on him,

Bill Robinson chuckled silently. "I did Smithie a good turn by chasing that fellow back where he belongs," he said to himself. "Don't think he'll run Consolidated much longer. I think he's as crooked as a roulette wheel at Reno."

CHAPTER XII.

A SPY?

AFTER a hearty lunch at White's, Bill Robinson and the late professor, Irving Smith, were driven out to the new municipal landing field, where a spare plane of the New York and Montreal Airways Corporation was waiting to convey the big boss and his associate to their destination.

Bill had figured on five or six hours to Michigan City, but he had counted without the necessary allowance for auto traffic in the metropolis, which in 1931 had increased almost to the saturation point. It was nearly an hour and a half before they reached Van Cortlandt Park, where the city terminal was located.

"Aviation will never be a complete success until some way is found to get around this sort of thing," Robinson declared to his companion. "These new Copeland buses of ours can make Boston, for example, in an hour and a quarter, but when you have added on an hour and a half to the terminal on this end and an hour at Boston, they only cut the time of the New Haven expresses by an hour or so. And most passengers prefer the route which eliminates these traffic delays. No wonder most of the airways are not making money."

"True, but we'll make Michigan City in seven hours at the most, while the train would take nearer twenty."

"Oh, sure. The air's the only method to cover very long distances. Though Bates tells me that the Consolidated, which flies from Chicago to the Coast, is still in the red."

"Well," said Smith, "when you have all the airways in one combine, your long hauls will more than make up your losses for the short hauls."

"Old Reach showed me very plainly that consolidation of airways is a pipe dream," replied Bill. "I don't believe father had it in mind at all. For example, Eastingham controls both air lines from New York to Chicago, but we don't have to patronize him. We take one of our Montreal planes and switch it to Chicago when we happen to want to hop there and we don't have to pay a fare to Enoch. This municipal airfield system dealt a death blow to plans for monopoly. I'd give a million to know what this inventor Lewton has up his sleeve."

"We ought to find out pretty soon, then. Here's the Terminal."

There had been a tremendous howl from the hoi polloi when the city decided to utilize a vast stretch of Van Cortlandt Park for an air field, but the mayor had been far-sighted enough to push the project through, and as a result the great city possessed the finest air terminal in the world, and its fees from patrons had already paid the cost of the plant in a single year.

The big Robinson car ran into the auto park, where a uniformed representative of the N. Y. & Montreal Airways was waiting to escort them to the plane. It was a huge all-metal, trimotored, twenty-passenger Copeland which awaited them, and its crew of two pilots, steward, chef and mechanic were lined up to receive them.

"Why send this monster out with two passengers?" asked Bill shrewdly.

"A small mail plane would have been all we needed."

"It was available, sir," said the New York manager of the company, "and I wanted to make you as comfortable as possible. There are Pullman berths if you want to lie down, and we can serve you dinner on board. It's three thirty now, and we can't land you at Michigan City before eight. And—I wonder if you would do Miss Eastingham a favor."

"Miss Eastingham?"

"Yes, sir, Miss Margaret Eastingham. Her aunt is very ill in Chicago. She has had a telegram, and she missed the one o'clock plane for Chicago, while the night plane doesn't leave until nine. The manager of the Eastingham lines heard a special plane was going as far as Michigan City, and asked if we would take her. A motor will meet her at the landing field and get her into Chicago in an hour."

Bill looked dismayed, and shot a glance at the professor, whose eyes were shining with delight.

"We've got to get under way immediately," Bill said. "We can't wait, even for Miss Eastingham."

"But she's here, sir. She's in the plane."

Taking no chances on being refused, he thought. Aloud: "Smith, what do you think?"

"I would appreciate it very much if we can oblige her," replied Smithie.

"All right. Tell her it will be a pleasure," Bill said to the manager, who immediately ran over to the airplane.

"THIS strikes me as kind of queer," Robinson said in a low tone. "Do you suppose—"

"Don't be absurd," protested Smith. "Margaret has to get to Chicago in a hurry. What would she think of me if we refused her? Her aunt is probably dying. Nobody knows our purpose."

"I'm not so sure. That darn office of mine is probably a whispering gallery. Not a word, Smith, during this trip, about Lewton."

"I'll have more agreeable things to talk about," he answered with a delighted laugh. "When you see Margaret you'll be crazy about her. Red hair, green eyes, complexion like a baby—some girl, Bill."

"Sounds like all the celebrated vamps of history. Oh, all right."

He got a glimpse of Margaret looking through a window and, despite his suspicion, was favorably impressed. They ascended the stairs and entered the cabin.

The new Copeland plane was a Pullman sleeping car in miniature, and represented the last word in passenger plane design. It could carry twenty passengers on a day trip and sleep ten passengers very comfortably at night by the ordinary system of turning cushioned seats into double berths. The placing of a table in each section turned the cabin into a dining car, and from a completely equipped kitchen an excellent repast could be served.

The Montreal Line was the most profitable air line in America. Planes left New York at two A.M. and landed passengers in Montreal at seven in the morning, while the day plane departed at two P.M. and enabled passengers to dine at a good hour at the Montreal hotels. As in the case of night railroad trains, patrons could go aboard as early as eleven P.M. and turn in.

Montreal, with its wines and liquors, its night life and its good hotels, had a special attraction for New Yorkers still writhing under Prohibition. Robinson wished that the capital of the

Province of Quebec were his destination upon this occasion. A holiday would do him a world of good.

Miss Eastingham was sitting facing the young men as they entered and wearing a bewitching smile. The smile dispersed Robinson's suspicions and intoxicated Professor Smith.

"This is certainly a delightful surprise," declared Smith advancing with outstretched hand. "I want to present to you my chief and my best friend, Bill Robinson. This is Miss Eastingham, Bill. Aren't we lucky?"

"I consider myself the fortunate one," she declared, releasing her hand from the grasp of the professor and extending it to Robinson. "I was at my wit's end when our general manager told me that a special plane was going almost to Chicago and he thought he could arrange for me to travel on it."

"I regret we can't take you all the way," said Bill politely. "And it's a great pleasure to meet you. Smithie, here, has been singing your praises. But he said you had red hair. It's golden."

"Flatterer. It's really red. I suppose he told you my eyes were green."

"Lovely color," Bill assured her.

"I don't agree with you, but there is nothing I can do about it. So you are the great William Robinson."

"I wouldn't say that," he said with a smile. "I'm shuffling round in my father's shoes which are miles too big."

SHE inspected him through half-closed eyes. "You look very capable," was her verdict. "I assure you my uncle is scared to death of you."

"I beg to doubt that. I certainly have a healthy respect for him."

"Well, sit down, both of you. The least I can do to pay for my passage is to try to entertain you. I can sing and recite and in proper costume I can stand on my head."

"The girl is gifted," Bill declared. "Just let us bask in the radiance of your smile and we'll be amply repaid."

"All ready for the take-off?" asked the pilot.

"All ready," replied Robinson. There was a rattle, as the automatic starter set the engines in motion and then followed the contented purr of the great engines and the whirr of three enormous propellers. In the early days of passenger planes the roar of machinery was deafening and travelers were unable to speak to one another during an air journey. The noise, in fact, was the greatest drawback to airplane transit. But the invention of almost sound-proof casings for the engines and the muffling of propeller transmission had subdued the racket until it wasn't much more objectionable than the noise of the engine of a motor car going sixty miles an hour. By raising their voices a trifle, Bill and his companions were able to talk freely and comfortably.

"What on earth takes you two great men to Michigan City?" asked the girl innocently. Robinson's suspicions awoke again.

"What's the matter with Michigan City?" he countered. "Are you acquainted with it?"

"There are some lovely summer places on the shore road. I have visited friends there."

"That's what we are going to do."

"I wonder if I know them?" she said artlessly. "Who are they?"

"The Richards," replied Bill mendaciously, with a warning look at Smithie whose astonishment was too obvious. The girl intercepted it and took offense.

"I don't know them," she said shortly. "If you men wish to talk together, ignore me. I have magazines to read. Why, we're in the air!"

"Going up is simple," declared Smith. "It's the coming down which is hair-raising."

"Oh, I adore the falling sensation. It's a marvelous thrill."

Bill rose. "I'm going to leave you kids to talk together," he stated. "I planned to take advantage of this trip to look over some reports."

"You remind me so much of my uncle," she said pleasantly. "He never escapes from his business."

Robinson walked to the other end of the cabin and seated himself, then went to his bag and took out a portfolio which he opened ostentatiously. It contained copies of the auditor's reports which Reach had partially explained that morning, and he couldn't make much out of them. The figures began to dance before his eyes and he looked out the big window of nonshatterable glass, inspecting the panorama below.

The machine was already three thousand feet up and rising higher. The Hudson was a silver streak, the roads white threads upon which moved flylike objects which he knew were motor cars. He saw two or three planes in the air, all at a higher altitude.

He could hear most of the conversation from forward. Smith and Margaret were discussing the dinner of the previous night and the name of Sam Bates came into the conversation. He listened.

"THIS is a humdrum age," said the young woman who was, at the moment, flying through the air at one hundred and seventy-five miles an hour. "Romance has vanished, life is commonplace, and most men are very prosaic. Sam may be crude and rough, but, at least, he is a man of action. He fought in the war. He is a two-fisted battler. His arrogance and his brutality have a certain appeal for a woman. You can't blame us."

"I imagine he would do me up in a fist fight," replied Smith, "but I consider myself the better man. From what I've heard of the fellow he has been mixed up in some shady deals."

"Oh, I don't suppose he has much respect for silly laws. Really big men have always considered themselves above the law, haven't they? Look at Napoleon."

"Well, I haven't heard of Bates conquering the world," replied Smith. "I have more respect for men who succeed by scrupulously obeying laws than for those who flout them."

She laughed. "I wonder how many men succeed in life who are meticulous about rules and regulations. Between ourselves, I don't think Uncle Enoch worries much about the rules of business. And from what I have heard of your friend's father, he took what he wanted and didn't bother how he got it."

"I'm afraid you haven't many principles yourself," laughed Smith.

"Oh, I don't even break the prohibition law though I think it's silly. It happens that I have everything in the world I want; but if I didn't have it, I wouldn't hesitate to fracture a few statutes to get it."

"I don't think you're half as bad as you paint yourself."

"I'm afraid you're prejudiced in my favor."

"I certainly am."

She laughed. "By the way, if you're going to be long in Michigan

City, look up the Fletchers. They live a couple of miles down the lake. They have a lovely place and Alice Fletcher is a pal of mine."

"Aren't you going to see her yourself?"

"'Fraid not, this time. I'm going to be with my aunt for a few days and then return to New York. Of course I'll call her on the phone. Most likely the people you are going to see will know her. You may meet her. She's a beauty."

"I wonder if you know anybody named Lewton?" asked Smith. Bill uttered an angry exclamation under his breath. That was criminally indiscreet of the professor.

"Never heard the name," replied Margaret. "By the way, have you seen that new war play, 'Trench Fever'? It's stunning."

The conversation drifted off to books and plays and Bill abandoned his intention of butting in on the conversation.

CHAPTER XIII.

AN AMAZING MOVE.

ROBINSON was pretty well convinced that Margaret Eastingham was a spy. It was dirty work on Enoch's part to send his young niece on a job like this, but she had betrayed herself by asking too many questions about their visit to Michigan City.

Eastingham, of course, had no scruples about anything. There was no doubt he had put the girl up to inviting Smith to their home because he was associated with Robinson's, and, learning that both the professor and himself were setting out suddenly for an unimportant town like Michigan City, Margaret was the logical person to send along with them. These red-headed girls with green eyes had been vampires from the beginning of time. Very likely it wasn't the first use which Enoch had made of his clever niece. She was probably accustomed to playing Delilah.

How had Eastingham learned that they were going to Michigan City? Well, Smith had phoned to the airplane company, and it must have leaked out of his office or from the office of the airplane company. And Smith hadn't made a secret about it. It had not occurred to Bill to instruct him to. No doubt Eastingham knew their plans in an hour, phoned his niece who trumped up the tale of the sick aunt, and the management of the Chicago line had made the request of the Montreal people who saw no reason why Eastingham should not be granted a favor.

Already Smith had dragged in the name of Lewton and the girl would be able to inform her uncle just whom Robinson and his associates were going to see. Furthermore, Redding had gone over to Eastingham with previous code messages and the code book; after all, old Enoch was better informed of what business Lewton was transacting with Robinson's than Bill was himself.

Irving Smith might be a business expert and a loyal friend, but he was guileless as a child and he was obviously infatuated with this Circe. If he were alone in the plane with her he would tell all he knew. In fact he had told all he knew. Neither Smith nor Bill Robinson knew anything more about Lewton than his name and the fact that he sent telegrams in Choctaw.

Bill put away his reports which he couldn't understand anyway and joined

the pair forward. It seemed that Margaret sensed his hostility, for she grew pensive and occasionally flashed him a resentful glance from her green eyes.

They talked in desultory fashion as the great plane darted through ether and logged from a hundred and fifty to a hundred and seventy-five miles an hour. Presently the steward came out of his cubbyhole and set up a tea table, and then they had tea and cakes. The girl partook with a healthy appetite.

"Isn't it curious," she said, "how quickly one takes things for granted. I haven't looked out of the window for a long time. It seems to me that the scenery from an airplane is deadly dull and uninteresting. I much prefer a motor car."

As she spoke the plane dropped violently, knocking over the teapot and momentarily removing the seats from beneath the sitters. Then the machine tilted viciously to the right, apparently standing upon one wing. They heard shouts from the pilot house, and Bill, looking up through the opposite window which at the instant was over him, saw in the sky a plane, high above, and heading at them.

At the same instant one of the pilots thrust his head through the door.

"We're descending," he exclaimed. "We are being attacked."

Margaret shrieked and threw her arms around the neck of Smith who was sitting beside her, and Robinson realized that a machine gun was being fired with deadly intent at the big passenger plane.

THE Copeland gave a lurch and the pursuing plane vanished from view. The trio were then treated to an exhibition of violent maneuvering which caused them to cling desperately to the arms of their benches.

The pilot of the passenger plane was a war veteran and brought into use all he knew of escape methods. He was descending as rapidly as he dared, but he had to zigzag and spiral to avoid the stream of bullets which were being directed at him from a smaller and swifter machine.

Fortunately he was not more than three thousand feet up when the attack occurred and it was only a matter of a few minutes before he struck the ground, but in that time a score of bullets had passed through the fuselage, and the assistant pilot was wounded in the arm. Several bullets crashed through the windows of the cabin and then there came a heavy bump as the machine landed.

As it happened, it descended upon an Indiana prairie, an expanse of flat, grassy ground, and the pilot retained sufficient control to make a fairly decent landing. Nevertheless, the passengers were badly shaken up and Margaret Eastingham fainted in the arms of Professor Smith. The armed plane flew low and sent a volley into the Copeland as it came to rest in the field and then, instead of landing, soared again and disappeared in the west. The crew of the tri-motored machine were all uninjured save for the assistant pilot, and they rushed to the assistance of the passengers.

Robinson descended first and helped the girl, who was only half conscious, to the ground aided by the professor. The pilot was already in the field, as were the terrified chef and porter. They were all shouting at once.

"Suppose you tell me what happened," asked Bill, who was slightly giddy, but in full possession of his senses.

"We were attacked by an air pirate, sir," said the pilot. "It's the first time

I ever heard of such a thing in the East. We were covered with horseshoes to escape, I can tell you. What saved us was that he opened fire at too great a distance and gave me a chance to descend."

"You did a wonderful job and I'll see that you are rewarded for it. Why didn't he land and finish his dirty work?"

"We're just outside a big village and I guess he lost his nerve. Say, Mr. Robinson, I didn't pay any attention to the fellow at all. We're accustomed to pass so many planes on a long trip that we don't notice them. My sidekick got wise first to the fact they were firing at us. I did my darnedest then. Say, the bullets were coming thick and fast; but that yellow dog was a bad shot. A chance bullet got Tom in the arm and we've got to get a doctor for him."

"Is it all over?" murmured Margaret. "Are we safe here?"

"Safe from that blank blank blank!" rasped the pilot. "He's gone for good, I guess. Say, Mr. Robinson, why should we be attacked?"

"I can't tell you," Bill answered quietly. "Here come some people. Let's get motor cars and go into the village."

"We broke one of our wheels when we hit," stated the pilot, "but, aside from cutting a few wires and breaking a couple of windows, I don't think any damage was done. Damn rotten shooting."

"To attack an unarmed plane!" marveled the professor. "Why, we might have been killed. They might have killed Margaret."

"I don't think there is any doubt that the intention was to murder us all," said Bill thoughtfully.

The pilot shook his head. He was a stolid dark man of about forty years; a veteran of the air.

"I've heard of attacking mail planes and those carrying gold shipments, but we're no prize for any one. It's beyond me."

PEOPLE had come from several farmhouses and two or three motor cars had stopped in the road a hundred yards distant. Robinson sent the steward for assistance. "We'd better get your assistant to a doctor," Bill told the pilot. "Where is he?"

"He's feeling weak and sitting in the plane, sir. I think I can have repairs made and go on inside of an hour."

"How far are we from Michigan City?"

"About a hundred miles east. We made good time and I expected to land you there in three-quarters of an hour."

"Well, with pirates in the air, we'll go on by motor," replied Bill. "You fix up the plane and return to New York at your leisure."

"Just as you say, sir. I don't blame you for wanting to stay on the ground."

"I'll report this to the police and have a nationwide search made for the scoundrel. Think he could have mistaken us for anything else?"

"We're plainly marked and it's obvious we're a twenty-passenger plane."

The village of Gustington, Indiana, was only a quarter of a mile distant, and in a few moments there were motors on hand to convey the whole party into town. Margaret had fully recovered and was laughing at her previous terror, but both Smith and Bill Robinson were in no mood to be amused.

As they rode into town, Bill was

compelled to discard his suspicion of the girl and to exonerate Eastingham from complicity in this outrage. Enoch Eastingham might be a villain, but he was hardly likely to send his lovely niece in their company as a spy and instigate an attack upon the airplane which would result in her death as well as that of the son of his ancient enemy. Bill had been outrageously unfair to Margaret and he must try to make amends.

There was no doubt in his mind, however, that the cause of the attack on the plane was his presence aboard. As the pilot had said, it was not carrying gold or securities which would have excited the avarice of air pirates. And Bill did not believe that there were such things as air pirates in the thickly settled East.

This armed plane must have been hastily secured by his unknown enemies as soon as they learned that he was going west in the Copeland machine and was sent after him to murder him and, incidentally, anybody who happened to be with him. But suppose Eastingham was not aware that Margaret was making the journey? He leaned back from where he was sitting beside the chauffeur toward Margaret and Smithie in the tonneau of the touring car.

"I hope your uncle won't hear of this before you can phone him," Bill said. "Did he know you were coming with us?"

She opened her big eyes. "Of course. He called up our airplane company manager to order a special plane, and when the manager informed him that the Montreal company was sending one out almost immediately he suggested that arrangements be made to take me along."

"Then you'd better phone him from this town. I'm going to hire a big car to carry Smith and myself the rest of the way, and we'll be delighted to take you as far as Michigan City, where your car will be waiting."

"Thanks. Mr. Smith had already invited me," she said with a smile.

Bill leaned back. His first suspicions of Margaret Eastingham returned. Enoch had jumped at the chance to put her aboard the plane with himself and Smith, probably in the hope she would learn something which would be of interest to him. But of course this proved his innocence in connection with the attacking airplane.

Who else wanted him removed? He remembered the statement of Reach, the lawyer, that morning—that the people who had killed his father were quite likely to murder him if they had reason to consider him dangerous. Well, they had had ample opportunity to assassinate him in New York, since it had not occurred to him to take measures to protect himself. Why pick a moment when half a dozen innocent people would be sent to death with him?

It was only by miraculous good fortune that the Copeland had not been destroyed. She was a big helpless machine pursued by one which was faster and armed with machine guns. Rotten shooting and a cowardly gunner alone had been responsible for their still being in the land of the living.

Had this attack anything to do with knowledge of his mission to Michigan City? It was beyond him. It was so unfair that he should have to move completely in the dark while his enemies were thoroughly informed of his movements. Was there a possibility that there would be another attack tonight?

He doubted that. The man or men in

the airplane had seen it go down and probably assumed it had crashed so hard as to kill the occupants. They had showered it with bullets as it lay on the ground and supposed they had finished any life in it.

THE news had preceded them into town, and they found the main street crowded with excited people. A newspaper reporter accosted Robinson, addressed him by name, and asked for a statement which he was compelled to give.

"We were attacked by an armed airplane while journeying from New York to Chicago," Bill said tersely. "No, I have no notion regarding the identity of the plane nor the reason for the outrage. Our assistant pilot was slightly injured by a machine gun bullet. Nobody else was hurt. Our business in Chicago is a private matter. That's all there is to say."

"Don't you think it curious that an attack should be made upon you, sir, so soon after the murder of your father and his partners?" asked the reporter, who was an alert young man with nose glasses and a gray suit which badly needed pressing.

"I haven't thought about it. I don't know that the attack was aimed at me. It's possible we were mistaken for a plane containing a gold shipment. We want the injured man taken to a doctor and we wish to hire a big car to take us on our way."

He escaped from the reporter, who wished to interview Miss Eastingham on the impressions of a young woman in an airplane which was under machine gun fire.

"I had no impressions," said Margaret with a smile. "I fainted immediately and didn't come to until we were safe on the ground."

"Is there any special significance in the niece of Mr. Enoch Eastingham being in a plane with Mr. Robinson? I understand that they are business opponents."

"We are all good friends, and my uncle and Mr. Robinson are on the best of terms," she replied. "Now please excuse me. I must telephone to New York."

Smith led her into the little hotel and the reporter rushed to his office with the biggest story which had ever broken in that town. Tom Jakes, the injured assistant pilot, was conducted to a doctor's office accompanied by Robinson and the pilot of the plane. An examination showed that the wound was unimportant, and it was deftly dressed.

In fifteen minutes a big limousine arrived from the town garage with a chauffeur who promised to get his passengers to Michigan City in two hours and a half. It was still broad daylight, but the hour was six thirty.

There was a slight delay before Margaret appeared.

"I talked with my uncle," she said, smiling. "He had already heard the news and he was almost incoherent with rage and alarm. He wanted me to tell you that he has already set in motion every agency of law and order and he hopes to see that aviator sent to the electric chair."

"I certainly share his hope," replied Bill. "And I'm afraid the attack was aimed at me. It may not be safe for you to accompany us the rest of the way. Perhaps you had better go on by train or in another car."

She squared her shoulders. "I assure you I am not afraid and I prefer to travel with you and Professor Smith. That is, if you don't object."

"Not at all," Bill said untruthfully.

"I wonder how your uncle heard the news."

"It was wired to the New York *Sun* from here and they phoned our apartment, so he said."

"Well, let's start."

CHAPTER XIV.

THE GARAGE MECHANIC.

THE journey to Michigan City was made in record time. As it was the dinner hour, the roads were almost deserted and the chauffeur was able to average over fifty miles per hour. Bill was busy with his thoughts and paid no attention to the low-toned conversation on the back seat.

A few minutes after half past eight the motor car drove into a town of wide streets and low red brick buildings, which was Michigan City. Bill told the driver to continue on to the airfield where Miss Eastingham's car was awaiting her. The port was located a mile west of the business center.

When they arrived Bill jumped out and opened the door for her.

"I can't tell you how grateful I am to you both," she declared. "Now that it's over, I am glad we had the experience. It will be something to remember."

"I believe I heard you telling Smith, a few moments before the attack, that this was a humdrum age and nothing ever happened in the least exciting," Bill said with a grin.

"Well, I know better now. I'm glad you told that reporter we were going to Chicago, because otherwise there would have been a mob on hand here, and I'd have to run the gantlet. There's my aunt's chauffeur coming. Good-by, Professor Smith. Going to call me up when we all get back to New York?"

"Yea, verily," declared Smith. "I certainly hate to have you leave us."

"Well, we had a wonderful adventure together. I'm so sorry I fainted."

Irving grinned at the recollection. "I'm sort of glad myself."

Margaret waved her hand to both of them and walked swiftly to the chauffeur, who had stopped respectfully ten feet distant. Smith followed, as did Robinson, and helped her into the automobile. When it started off, Bill sighed with relief.

"Now to business," he said. "Did she ask any more questions?"

The professor looked indignant. "Surely, after what happened, you still don't believe she was sent to spy on us."

"I don't know what to think. Of course Eastingham had nothing to do with the attack, but—"

"Upon my word," exclaimed Smith, "you're impossible! Margaret is the finest girl—"

"I don't doubt it," his friend said dryly. "Don't pay any attention to me, Smithie. I'll be suspecting you next."

"You would have as much reason as suspecting Margaret Eastingham."

"Well, there's no harm done. Everybody seems to have been aware of our little journey, including the people who sent a machine gunner chasing us through the sky. Come on back to town and let's find Lewton."

They entered the car and Bill told the chauffeur to drive to the post office. It was closed, all save one stamp window, and the clerk behind the window was bald, stupid, but very honest.

"It's against the rules to give out the address of anybody," he said.

"But this is a most important matter. Surely you know Mr. Lewton."

"No, I don't; but if I did I couldn't tell you. Look in the city directory."

"That's an idea," said Bill. "We know he's not listed in the telephone book, but he might be in the directory."

They dismissed the motor car and walked to a drug store, where they consulted a directory but found nobody named Lewton. The druggist was asked if he knew him and shook his head.

Discomfited the pair went out upon the sidewalk.

"We know the telegram was sent from here," said Smith. "Somebody in town knows him. Let's try the telegraph office."

At the telegraph office it was admitted that a code telegram had been sent by a man named Lewton, but they did not know his address.

"He comes in here and sends telegrams now and then, but he never gave us a residence," said the attendant.

"How does he receive his telegrams?"

"Calls for 'em. We've got two or three for him now."

"The full name is Chester Lewton, isn't it?" asked Smith.

"That's the man."

"Well, I'm much obliged," said Robinson sadly. "Good evening."

THEY left the telegraph office and went into conference on the sidewalk.

"A wild-goose chase," said Smithie. "He doesn't seem to live in town, and he doesn't want anybody to know where he lives. Eccentric, like most inventors."

"We know he visits this town and somebody must know him," said Bill savagely. "After what we've been through to get here I don't intend to leave until I've seen him."

"Right, chief. What's the next move?"

"Darned if I know. You take one side of the street and I'll take the other and ask in every store. Somebody must know him."

An hour was consumed in an utterly fruitless inquiry. Apparently the only connection Lewton had with Michigan City was the telegraph office. Having canvassed the main street and attracted a lot of attention, the pair met where the Michigan Central railroad crosses at grade, and reported to each other complete failure.

"Well," sighed Robinson, "we're licked. We'll hire a car and run into Chicago. Lewton may come into town to-morrow or the next day to get his telegrams. We'll leave one for him telling him to get in touch with me at my Chicago office. I don't know what else we can do."

"There's a garage across the street. Most likely we can secure a car there."

They entered a brightly lighted garage, and a man who was working on a car straightened up and inspected them. He was a small blond individual with a stringy yellow mustache and round blue eyes.

"You ban the two fella's that was hunting for Mr. Lewton?" he demanded with a pronounced Scandinavian accent.

"Yes; do you know where we can find him?" asked Robinson eagerly.

The mechanic grinned exasperatingly.

"Maybe yes, maybe no. What you want to see him about?"

Bill smiled. "It's a business matter. You tell me where he is and I'll tell him what we want to see him about."

"He don' live in Michigan City."

"But he comes here a lot, doesn't he?"

"Yah, he comes here sometimes."

"Where does he live?" demanded Smith.

"A long way from here," replied the garage man, who was now wiping his hands with cotton waste.

"Look here, my man," cajoled Bill. "If you know where he is, lead us to him. I'll make it well worth your while."

"Mr. Lewton, he is ver' funny fella'. Maybe he don' want to see you."

Believing that he had to deal with a "character," Robinson kept control of his temper.

"He is very anxious to see me," he assured the mechanic.

"Yah. Then you know how to find him?" jeered the man.

"I'll prove he wants to see me." Bill drew the code telegram from his pocket. "Here's a message from him. I got it in New York this morning and came here at once. Take a look at this."

The Swede finished wiping his hands and inspected the telegram.

Having read it one way he turned it upside down, shook his head and handed it back.

"I haven't got my specs. What does it say?"

"It says: 'Must see you immediately. Come to Michigan City to-day.'"

"Yah?"

"Yes. We expected him to meet us. We can't understand why he isn't here."

"Well, maybe his plane broke down."

"His airplane?"

"Hydroplane. He comes over the lake."

"Good Lord," groaned Bill, "he may live a hundred miles away if he uses a boat plane."

"No," said the Scandinavian. "'Bout forty miles."

"Then you know where he lives?"

The fellow grinned. "Sure. I work for him last winter."

"THAT'S great," cried Bill. "Just the man we're looking for. How much do you want to take us there?"

"I think maybe it's all right. You have to take a motor boat, mister. I don' know if you can get one. It cost maybe fifty dollars, twenty for the boat, thirty for me because I got to close the garage and stay up all night."

"Can't we get a motor car and make it in an hour or so?"

"Bet you can't. Mr. Lewton lives on an island in the lake. I tank I'm the only man in Michigan City knows which island."

"How would you like a hundred dollars?"

The fellow stared. "A hundred. You ain't foolin', mister?"

Bill pulled out a roll of yellowbacks and showed them to him.

"I get a fella to stay in the garage," said the Swede enthusiastically. "You wait a minute."

He shambled out of the garage, and Bill and Smithie grinned from ear to ear.

"Pure bull luck," exclaimed Robinson. "We stumble on the only man in Michigan City who knows where Lewton lives. Furthermore he used to work for him. And he lives forty miles up the lake on an island. No wonder he wasn't in the telephone book or the city directory."

"It's curious he comes here for telegrams. There must be big towns on the east shore of the lake which are nearer."

"It's very evident that he doesn't want his residence known," replied Bill. "I'm getting exceedingly interest-

ed. Here comes Knute Knutson, bless him, with another Nordic in tow."

The second Scandinavian nodded to the pair and went immediately into the office.

The garage man beckoned to them, and they followed him.

"I tank maybe I use my own boat," he said. "You pay a hundred dollars just the same?"

"Certainly."

The fellow led them across the railroad tracks and walked them at a fast pace across a small park to the lake front and then west, a hundred yards, to a small pier. He jumped into a rowboat, nodded, and they followed him, and then he rowed out into the blackness of the lake. In a few minutes he brought up alongside a twenty-foot motor boat with a small cabin.

"My boat," he said. "Her name is Hulda."

"Your wife?"

The fellow tittered. "No, my girl."

They climbed aboard, and he made the painter of the rowboat fast to the stern and then dived down into the cabin, returning with oilskins and rubber hats.

"I tank it blow some outside," he observed and began to don his own oilskins. Then he proceeded leisurely to light a lantern.

CHAPTER XV.

WITHOUT LIGHTS.

HIS next move was to cast loose the mooring, start the engine, and take the wheel, but before he opened the throttle there was a hail from a rowboat which was coming up astern.

"Robinson!"

"Hello," shouted Bill, leaping to his feet and peering in the direction of the call. It was already dark night, but he could distinguish two men rowing and one in the stern of the boat, which was some thirty feet away.

"Down, you f o o l," exclaimed Smith, and deftly kicked Bill's legs from under him so that he collapsed into the cockpit. A second later there was a bark from an automatic, followed by another and another as a stream of bullets whined across the motor boat. The boat owner uttered a yelp of alarm and instinctively threw down the accelerator, which caused the boat to dart forward.

The automatic pistol emptied its magazine before the larger craft was out of range, but its three occupants were flat on their faces and the boat was driving forward unguided. Before the assassin could open up again, Robinson doused the light, and within a couple minutes the pursuers were hopelessly left behind.

"I'm much obliged to you, professor," said Bill, reaching for the hand of his friend. "But how did you know?"

"I haven't forgotten this afternoon," replied Smith. "And as you answered his hail I saw something gleam in his hand."

"I answered instinctively to my name," Robinson reflected. "And I would have given him a fine target if it hadn't been for your presence of mind. . . . Hey, Oscar, what are you doing?"

The Swede was at the wheel and was heading back for the port.

"For a hundred dollars I get killed, yah? No, mister. The deal is off."

"You chump, if you turn back those fellows will start shooting again!" declared Smith.

The owner of the motor boat realized the force of that argument. He hesitated.

"I tank that was the police. I get into no trouble."

"Of course it wasn't the police," pleaded Bill. "The police wouldn't empty an automatic at innocent people. Those people were trying to keep us from going to Lewton's."

He said this purely as argument, but as he spoke he realized that it was true. And it was to prevent him from reaching Lewton that a plane had opened upon the Copeland with a machine gun that afternoon!

The boat was moving slowly as its owner made up his slow-moving mind.

"I don't want no trouble with nobody," he said. "I'll land you farther down and go right home."

Bill glided forward and stood beside him at the wheel.

"I am a friend of Lewton's, and I must reach him," he said. "I'm a very rich man, Mr. What's-your-name. There won't be any more trouble, and I'll give you five hundred dollars instead of one hundred. Take a chance, won't you?"

"Those fella, they get a motor boat and chase us."

"Speed up, and they won't be able to follow us. You say yourself that nobody knows where Lewton lives except you."

"Yah, that's right. Mr. Lewton don't let nobody know where he lives. Five hundred dollars?"

"Here's half of it in advance."

The boatman again turned the nose of his craft to the open lake.

"All right," he said sullenly. "I take a chance. You tell me why they shoot at us? We ain't done nothing."

"I don't know why they shot at us unless it's as I told you."

"Well, you light the lantern again. I don't navigate the lake without no light."

"If we put on the light, we reveal our whereabouts. Run five minutes without lights, and then it will be safe."

"All right. It's dam' queer, this business."

"You said something," replied Bill. "Here's your two hundred fifty dollars. How fast can this craft travel?"

"Well, she ban an old boat. I fix the engine up good myself, and she make maybe twelve miles an hour."

"Good Lord, we'll be four hours getting to this island."

"Sure. I told you it take a long time."

"Well, do the best you can."

BILL returned to the cockpit and seated himself beside Smith.

The professor was humming a little tune.

"What makes you feel so goldarned good?" Bill asked indignantly.

"I seem to get uplifted by danger," replied the professor. "It's a new trait I've developed. Didn't know I had it. Though, for that matter, I've never been in danger before."

"Well, I'm scared to death personally. Do you realize what this means, Smithie?"

"They're trying to murder you, and, incidentally, me," replied Smith. "I gathered that much."

"It means this: Chester Lewton has something big, something perfectly enormous. It was to prevent Robinson and Company from making a deal with him that my father and his partners were killed. It was to stop me from putting the deal through that they tried to shoot down my plane to-day. The rat in the attacking airplane assumed

we were killed and vanished toward the west, but, thanks to the radio and the telegraph, the head murderer was informed that he had failed. He shot some more gunmen down to Michigan City to finish us here, but they didn't get on our trail until we had started out with Knute. Then they piled into a rowboat and came after us. Probably weren't sure that they were after the right person, so they shouted my name. Like an idiot I answered, and then they blazed away. Is this reasonable?"

"The shooting part of it is perfect. I don't know about your theory."

"Well, of course it's surmise. I put two and two together. Lewton, we know, is an inventor with especial reference to airplanes. He was in code communication with father. Perhaps f a t h e r was financing him. Why, Smithie, it might explain the big reserve fund father was piling up. He was going to pay it for this thing of Lewton's, whatever it is. And, as the fund was in millions, it must be something gigantic, perhaps revolutionary. Other people want it, but can't pay for it. Get me?"

"I know you're very much excited, Bill. You have very little upon which to build your conclusions."

"Well, we'll soon find out. Wouldn't it be wonderful if we have blundered onto father's secret? We've certainly smoked out his enemies. I know two of them by name."

"Who, for Heaven's sake?"

"Redding is one, and I think Sam Bates is the other. Eastingham is probably backing them."

"And sending them to murder his niece? Don't be a fool."

"Well, I can't explain that part of it, but mark my words, Lewton will make everything clear."

"I certainly hope so. The entire affair is exceedingly melodramatic. In the year of grace 1931, the idea of putting through business deals with bombs and machine guns seems absolutely preposterous."

Bill laughed. "You may talk like that, but in emergencies you act quickly enough. If you hadn't knocked me over I would have had a dozen bullets in my body."

"I'm glad I was of service," said the professor with a smile. "But has it occurred to you that we are out in the middle of Lake Michigan in a small motor boat with the possibility of pursuit by murderous enemies and we haven't so much as a penknife with which to defend ourselves? At least I haven't."

"Oh, they can't find us in this black waste of waters."

"It's possible, however, that they may know where Lewton's island is located. And they certainly know that it's where we're headed."

"Maybe they don't. Lewton has been very secretive. Everything points to that. The code and this remote island.

"It was the merest chance we found a man who used to work for him on this island."

"I certainly hope we've lost them," said the professor. "It's getting rough. I hope I won't be seasick."

"Of course you won't."

"Well, I've never before been on Lake Michigan in a small boat."

"Say, you fella better light the lantern," shouted the boatman from the wheel.

Bill looked back. The lights of Michigan City were faint now and far behind, but the shore lights from the boulevard, which runs for miles along the lake, were very bright.

"Run out to sea about a mile farther and I'll light up," he replied.

THE Swede grumbled, but obeyed. In five minutes they were in rougher water, but they had the satisfaction of being very far from the shore. Away to the north they saw the lights of a big steamer, but there seemed to be no traffic in the direction in which they were heading. At least they saw no lights. Bill relit the lantern, and Smith lit a cigarette. Robinson caught his eye, and they smiled understandingly. A good time was being enjoyed by both.

The fresh night breeze blowing across the inland ocean invigorated them, the jets of foam which occasionally struck them in the face were refreshing. They were young and the spirit of adventure was strong in both of them. There seemed to be an occasion, and they were rising to it.

The young giant, William Robinson, was a first-class fighting man who had been born into a world which did not seem to need one. He found the physical action he needed during his school and college years in athletics, particularly football, and then he had lazed a few years until circumstances thrust him behind a desk in an office from which the affairs of a large part of the nation's industries were conducted.

Never would Bill Robinson have succeeded in that job. He was no intriguer and he had an old-fashioned conscience. He would have blundered about for a few months, made savage but blind assaults upon his enemies, and finally would have fallen and had his bones picked clean.

But the enemy had taken the offensive, they had chosen physical action, they had disclosed their object and seemed willing to fight it out his way. So his spirits soared.

Smith also was a strong, healthful young man, studious by nature, but not lacking in a spirit of adventure. He was almost as poorly equipped for the money-making game as his young chief and thoroughly aware of the fact.

His life had been placid and unexciting, and his first great thrill had come that afternoon when he realized that he was under fire and that Margaret Eastingham was appealing to him for protection. His arms still tingled from the feel of her as she lay unconscious in them. That he was wildly in love with Margaret he had already admitted to himself. He had parted from her with a pang, but he was confident that the events of the afternoon had brought her close to him. Probably she didn't love him yet, but she would. Sam Bates, the dauntless aviator, would not have behaved any better in the emergency than he had done.

So Irving Smith and Bill Robinson were glad that their headquarters had been transferred from a luxurious office on lower Broadway to a small motor boat on the broad breast of Lake Michigan.

An hour passed. Two hours. They became aware that they had eaten nothing since they had partaken of tea and cakes at five thirty on the Copeland plane.

"I say, Mr. Oscar, got anything to eat on board?" Bill called out.

"Sure. And my name is Olaf. My father's name was Oscar. Olaf Griegson, that's my name, mister."

"Delighted to know it. Smith and Robinson are our monikers. How do we get these eats and what are they?"

"In the closet in the cabin. I tank there is a can of sardines and some soda crackers."

"Come on, Smithie. That sounds marvelous."

They crawled into the tiny cabin, found a lantern and lit it, and in a cupboard discovered not only the sardines and crackers, but a tin of coffee.

There was a single-burner kerosene stove on a shelf forward and a few cooking utensils. Smith took the coffee can and in a few minutes the agreeable aroma of cooking coffee filled the cabin.

"NOT so bad, this," declared Bill contentedly. In a basin at Brooklyn lay a two-hundred-foot motor yacht which was his father's property and now belonged to him, but he found this primitive gas launch much more fun. And the badly cooked coffee, and the imitation sardines, which were actually pickled smelts, and the stale soda biscuits tasted better than the best French dinner he had ever eaten.

After half an hour: "Save a little of that coffee, Smithie, and take it up to Yonson. He can probably use it."

They went on deck. Olaf gratefully drank the unsweetened coffee, and they squatted near him at the wheel.

"How much longer will it take us to get us there?"

"Maybe an hour and a half. Maybe two hours. I got to slow up passing among the islands."

"This island of Lewton's is one of a group, is it?"

"Yah, but his is three or four miles from the others."

"What's the name of it?" asked Smith.

"I tank he call it Eureka Island. It's something else on the map. I forget."

"Eureka," repeated Bill. "You appreciate the significance of that."

"Certainly. It means 'Discovered,'" Smith said.

"Well, add it to what I was telling you a little while ago and see if it does not fit in."

Smith nodded. "Does he live alone on the island, Olaf?" he demanded.

"When I work for him there were six men, all good mechanics."

"What kind of work did you do?"

"I work in the machine shop."

"Oh, he has a machine shop on the island. That's interesting. What does he manufacture?"

"Crazy things. No good."

"Such as what?"

"Thingumbobs for automobiles and airplanes."

"How did you happen to leave him? Didn't he pay you well?"

"I got a hundred dollars a week," said Olaf proudly. "But Lewton wouldn't let me go home often enough. My girl, Hulda—I name this boat after her—Hulda make me chuck the job and get something to do in Michigan City, so I am manager of the garage."

"All for love," said Bill softly.

"When are you going to be married?" asked Smith sympathetically.

Olaf grinned broadly. "I tank maybe with this five hundred dollars we get married right away."

"Well," promised Bill, "if you land us safely on Lewton's island I'll give you another five hundred for a wedding present."

"Eh?" Olaf stared at him, looking like an owl in the murk. "I tank you must be crazy."

"No," said Smith. "You are transporting one of the richest men in the world. Ever hear of William Robinson?"

"No," said Olaf flatly. "Never heard of that fella."

Smith chuckled. "Take that, Bill! Such is fame."

"What sort of person is Mr. Lewton to work for?"

"All right."

"What's that light ahead? It's not on the mainland."

"Island. We pass it to port."

CHAPTER XVI.

THE BLOCKADE.

HALF an hour passed. They came abreast of the island and saw twinkling lights from several houses, and then left it astern. They raised another island ahead. Bill realized that he was very tired and Smithie was nodding.

Robinson pricked up his ears as he heard the hum of another motor. It seemed to be ahead, but there was nothing visible. It grew louder. A moment later a shape blacker than the night darted into their vision, and at the same instant its motor stopped.

"Where's your light?" bellowed Olaf.

"Stop your motor," commanded a cursing voice from the strange craft. "I want a look at you."

"Federal agents," whispered Bill. "Do what they tell you, Olaf."

Olaf shut off his power, and the other boat ran up alongside. It was a long, low, black speed boat driven like an automobile. There was a man behind the driving wheel and another standing up and peering at them.

"Who are you and where are you going?" he asked roughly.

"I ban Olaf Griegson, and I go to Eureka."

"The hell you do," shouted the stranger, who stepped on the gunwale of his boat and leaped aboard the Hulda. Bill saw that he had a gun in his hand, and he saw Smith rise up behind the fellow, grasp his right arm, twist the weapon out of his hand, and cover the operator of the speed boat with it.

With a shout Robinson threw himself upon the visitor, and they fell together upon the deck.

"Hands up, you," shouted Smithie; and the surprised man behind the speed boat wheel lifted obedient arms.

"Get out from there and keep your hands up. Got that fellow, Bill?"

"Safe and sound," chuckled Bill, who had choked the fight out of the disarmed customer.

"Come on board," commanded the professor to the chauffeur of the speed boat. "Olaf, grab that boat and don't let it drift off. Do as I say, damn you."

"Funny business," commented Olaf as he secured the speed boat.

"Now," asked Smith mildly, "why can't we go to Eureka?"

"Never mind that," snapped Bill. "Cover this pirate while I frisk the other one." Bill rose from his victim, grasped the second man, and tapped his hip. Result, a good-sized automatic.

"A little while ago you complained that we didn't even have a penknife with which to defend ourselves," Robinson chortled. "Now look at us. Answer the gentleman's question, one of you fellows."

"There's a blockade around the place," said the man who had been running the speed boat.

"The heck you say! What kind of a blockade? What for?"

"Keep your mouth shut," snarled the fellow who was lying on the deck.

"How would you like to be thrown overboard?" snapped Bill. "You're

nothing but a pirate. You were running without lights, and you board this craft with a gun in your hand. That's a hanging matter."

"We were just going to warn you to keep away from Eureka," said the recumbent individual with a quick change of tone.

"Let me handle this, Bill," requested Professor Smith. "You say there is a blockade of Eureka. How long has it been going on?"

"Just to-night."

"Were you expecting visitors, by any chance?"

"If you're Robinson, we were told to see that you didn't get ashore," admitted the prostrate one.

"Well, well," exclaimed Bill. "I suppose the boys in Michigan City telephoned over. Now you two listen to me. I've been fired upon twice today, and I'm in a mood to shoot to kill. I happen to be rich enough to indulge myself and convince a jury it was self-defence. Get it through your heads that, if you lie to me, I'll fill you full of lead. Now, why is there a blockade of Mr. Lewton's island?"

"To keep him from leaving and to keep anybody from getting to him," said the man whom Smith was covering.

"OLAF, douse that light," commanded Bill. "We don't want any more blockaders coming down on us. How could you keep Lewton from leaving? He uses a hydroplane."

"It's been put out of commission," replied the blockader.

"And what's the purpose of all this?"

"Don't ask me. We were hired to patrol. We don't know anything about anything."

"I think you're a liar. How many patrol boats are there?"

"Two beside ours."

"Two men to a boat?"

"That's it."

"And I presume some of your friends are ashore, are they not?"

"I guess so."

"How many?"

"Eight or ten."

"And who's the boss?"

"We done business with a feller named Black."

"How far off is the island?"

"A couple of miles ahead."

"Do you happen to know why they have cut off Mr. Lewton? Know what they're after?"

"We don't know nothing about that."

"I suppose the boys ashore are all armed."

"Oh, sure."

"It looks as though Mr. Lewton were in grave danger," commented Robinson. "How's your courage, Smithie?"

"Pretty good. I presume we go ashore and call on these eight or ten armed men."

"Got to, darn it." Bill's eyes were dancing. "Olaf," he demanded, "got any rope aboard?"

"Sure."

"Well, tie up these two pirates. Then take them into the nearest port and tell the police that a mob of armed men have Mr. Lewton a prisoner on his island. Send over a posse, a couple of posses."

"You come with me, eh?"

"Nix, Olaf. The professor and myself are going ashore in that motor boat."

"You fellers will get your heads blown off," said the fellow on the deck who dared to lift to his elbow.

"Hurry up with the rope, Olaf."

Olaf dived into the cabin and appeared with a coil of rope. "How about my five hundred dollars?"

"You get it now. Tie these bozoes very tight."

Dissatisfied with Olaf's deliberation, Bill leaped to his assistance.

In two or three minutes both prisoners lay on deck so tightly wrapped up that their prospects of getting themselves loose were negligible.

"I can read a compass," declared Bill. "What's the direction, Olaf?"

"North north-east, a point east," replied the Swede. "I'll run into Clementport. It 'll be two hours before the police can get there. Maybe they won't pay no attention to me."

"Take a chance," laughed Bill. "Come on, Smith."

He jumped into the speed boat and Smithie followed him. Olaf released the line, and Bill grasped the wheel and stepped on the starter.

"A nice little boat, too," he observed as the engine began to roar.

"THE part of discretion was to accompany Olaf," said Smith mildly. "After all, there are only two of us, and between ourselves I never fired one of these automatics in my life."

"In two hours they may have killed Lewton and made off with his secret, whatever it is. That thing belongs to me, and I'm going to get it. I'll show how you fire that gun of yours. Say, boy, you certainly think quick in emergencies. I figured those fellows out as government men."

"I heard him say 'the hell you are,' when Olaf told him we were bound for Eureka and knew they were of the same stripe as those who fired on us in the harbor back there."

"There's something in education. It teaches you to use the little old bean. We're in one of the patrol boats, Socrates, and if we meet another, they'll suppose we are the old tenants. My idea is to creep up on this island, land somewhere and reconnoiter. What was that?"

"I thought I heard a gunshot. I did. They're fighting."

Bill opened up the throttle and Smith reached over and partially shut it with a quick protest: "If there's a battle on, don't you realize that both sides will open fire on us? We can't plunge in like wild bulls."

"Where is the blamed island? If there were only a few stars out we could see something."

"And be seen. . . . The firing has stopped."

"They may have got Lewton. The last place a man with a valuable secret should live is on an island."

But Bill followed his friend's advice and ran slowly forward. "It ought to be half a mile ahead, but I can't see it. Not a light showing."

"I suppose you know you are practically presenting yourself and your business to your enemies. This is the crowd that tried to murder you twice to-day."

"Fine," retorted Bill with a mad laugh. "It will be worth while to find out who they are."

The boat moved on for a couple of minutes longer and a flash of light ahead showed them that they were very close to land. Bill shut off his motor and let her glide.

"That looked like a pocket flash from somebody on the beach," he said softly. "I'm going to drift along for some distance and run her ashore anywhere. Don't care if I sink her. She doesn't belong to me."

Half a dozen pistol shots rang out in quick succession, but they saw no gun flashes.

"Trouble in bunches," observed Bill. The boat was now moving very slowly through the water a couple of hundred yards from a wooded shore. Bill turned her nose toward it. She drifted another hundred yards and bumped against something hard.

"Confound it, I'd have to start the engine to get her off. Take a look, Smith. Are we on a ledge?"

The professor crawled out upon the bow and peered, then scrambled back.

"Landed on a sandpit," he reported. "I think we can walk ashore."

"A bit of luck. Get close here and I'll show you how to use that gun. It's the simplest thing in the world. See. Throw off this catch and point the pistol and press on the trigger. Some of the bullets may do the job for you."

He jumped over the side and landed in water above his knees, laughed and waded ashore. Smith followed him, jaw set, every nerve atremble.

They could not see more than a dozen feet ahead of them, and they felt their way along, urged on by another burst of gunfire. They could see spurts of flame through the trees ahead.

"He would pick out an island," muttered Bill. "What on earth is this?"

They had landed on the shore at the edge of the woods and run smack against a high fence of chicken wire.

"We've got to climb this," Robinson declared. "Imagine fencing in an island. Oh, damn!"

As he started to climb a bell began to jangle.

"Quick!" he exclaimed, grasping Smith by the hand. "The nut has put up one of these belled fences. They have one between the Swiss and Italian frontiers to warn the frontier guards of smugglers. We've given the alarm for fair. Let's go away from here."

THEY followed the fence for a quarter of a mile where it ran down into the water.

"We've got to swim around it," decided Bill. "Come on. Don't worry about the gun, the cartridges are sure to be waterproof."

They swam out twenty yards, passed the fence, and came ashore on the edge of a cove. They could see a white, shapeless object a hundred yards out which was probably the disabled airplane.

Looking shoreward, all was dark and still for the moment.

"Well," said Bill, "we're here I'm cold and wet, and I don't even know that this fellow Lewton is a friend of mine. I'd be much obliged, Socrates, if you would tell me what to do now."

"What's that red mark? It's moving. Bill, it's a fuse!"

Others thought so, for a volley of shots were fired and they got flashes of a two-story house in a clearing a couple of hundred yards from the beach. The red dot moved rapidly toward the house, and suddenly there was an explosion which deafened them. In the crimson glare which replaced the darkness they saw the whole front of the house lift heavenward and then the light went out, but only for a couple of seconds, for the ruins of the house burst into flames.

"Dynamited!" exclaimed Bill. "Of all the dastardly—come on!"

Smith grasped his arm.

"Stay where you are. You'll be shot down like a dog. And the fire will give us a chance to find out what's going on."

The fire, in fact, supplied all needed illumination. Lewton's house was built upon a slight elevation facing the cove, and a broad lawn ran down to it. There was a pine grove at left and right where the attacking party was evidently concealed, and these seemed to have succeeded in placing explosives against the side of the house and setting them off by an old-fashioned powder fuse.

If there were people left alive in the house they would be driven out by the flames within a minute or two. At present not a living soul was visible.

"There's nothing to do for us," whispered Smith, "except to wait until Olaf comes with the police."

"There won't be any police," replied Bill. "Probably only a couple of men on duty in that little port he started for. Most likely they won't come over to investigate until morning. I hope Lewton wasn't killed."

"Look," exclaimed Smith. "They're coming out."

Four men, three of them with rifles, came out of the woods at the right of the house and stood on the lawn.

Immediately there were gunshots from the trees behind the house, and one of the four fell. The others galloped like antelopes back to cover.

"Hurray!" shouted Bill, beside himself. "The defenders are still on the job. Let's get into this."

"For heaven's sake, be careful. They've got rifles and we only have pistols. Lewton's men must have realized that the house was going to be blown up and escaped by the rear."

"Well, we can't stay here. Let's make a big detour through the woods at the left, get behind the house, and try to get in touch with Lewton."

"All right. Don't do any shooting, though. We don't want to bring them all down on us."

GUIDED by the burning house, they turned into the pine woods and crept noiselessly along upon the soft moss. Once they saw a man with a rifle standing behind a tree, but he was between them and the fire and did not see them. They walked perhaps a quarter of a mile in a wide half circle, when they came upon a long low building, dark and deserted.

"The machine shop, probably," whispered Bill. "We'll swing around behind it."

They heard desultory firing as they moved cautiously around the building, and Bill, who was a dozen feet ahead, walked unexpectedly into a clearing and was bathed in the light of an electric pocket flash.

"It's Robinson!" cried a voice which Bill did not recognize. Bill lifted his pistol just as the butt of a gun descended on his head.

"Don't shoot," called the same voice. "We want him alive."

Smith, who was about to rush forward, slipped back among the trees. He saw four men pick up Bill Robinson and carry him across the clearing. He hesitated. They wanted Robinson alive. Since he was in no immediate danger, his companion could do him more good if he kept out of the hands of the scoundrels. He would follow them and discover where they were taking his friend and employer. Skirting the clearing he moved cautiously after the men.

There was shooting from close at hand, he heard bullets zipping their way through the trees, and then he fell forward on his face, the top of his bare head grazed by a piece of lead.

TO BE CONTINUED NEXT WEEK.

The man was Simon's partner in the mill; and he was dead

Crushed Evidence

Mystery and a terrible death dog the steps of Pete Wade and his fellow lumberjacks in the Alabama woods

By HOWARD ELLIS DAVIS

WHEN the first cry of discovery sounded in the clear Alabama dawn just before the sun rose above the pines on the distant horizon, Pete Wade was harnessing his team over in the mule lot. Raising his head, bent as he was fastening the hames string beneath old Rowley's collar, he listened. The first voice was joined by another, high-pitched with excitement. Thinking that perhaps the mill was on fire, he left his mule, vaulted the lot fence and set off at a run.

Others were running in the same direction, and when he drew nearer he saw two men working frantically with canthooks at a great log. The log yard sloped sharply toward the mill, so that gravity would help in keeping the timbers rolled down, and these two were trying to turn the log back up the slope. When he was nearer, he saw that beneath the log a man lay crushed.

One of the mill owners, Simon Bach, an enormous man, wearing a wide-brimmed soft black hat, came pad-padding on his heavy feet. At once ranging himself below the log, he shoved with his hands. And it seemed that it was his great strength, which all knew was tremendous, more than the efforts of the two with the canthooks, that made the log turn slowly, up the slope, and roll off the prostrate man.

The man was Arnold Few, Simon's partner in the little mill. And he was dead. The log, sixteen inches in diameter and twenty-eight feet long, had rolled over his feet and legs and stomach and stopped across his chest.

Dropping to his knees, Simon half-lifted the body. "Crushed all to

pieces," he said in his calm, funereal voice, which nothing ever seemed to ruffle. "One of you boys take his feet an' let's git him to the house." It was Pete who helped him.

Simon and Arnold had jointly batched in a two-room board shack with lean-to kitchen not more than a hundred yards from the mill. After depositing the dead man on his bed in the room adjoining Simon's, Simon composed the stiffening limbs, then straightened himself and, shoving back the black hat, mopped his forehead. Speaking regretfully, he said:

"He had been drinkin' mo' corn than usual of late. He was drunk last night an' still under the influence this mornin'. He riz 'fo' day an' stumbled about. I tried to git him to drink a cup of strong coffee; but he wandered outa the house. Out on the log ramp, he must have started that there log to rollin' down the slope an' it caught him. I've warned you boys 'bout gittin' in the way of them logs on the ramp. Now I'm goin' to put up a sign, an' the first man I catches breakin' the rule is goin' to git his time."

Arnold Few had no relatives that anybody knew of, and Simon, as his nearest friend and business associate, made all arrangements for the funeral, which took place that afternoon, in order that the mill might resume operations on the following morning.

NEXT morning, the mill crew found, tacked to a board, a sign which read: "No Lofin On The Log Ramp." Simon himself usually attended to keeping the logs rolled down to within reach of the carriage. When he was busy at something else, or absent on his periodical trips to the woods, he turned his canthook over to a trusted negro.

Matters went on as usual. Arnold Few had been, at best, a shiftless person and, with his constant drinking, no help at all about the mill. His money had furnished the original capital that had started the enterprise; but it was generally understood that, for some time, the ownership had practically all passed into the hands of Simon. It was known that Simon had advanced him a hundred dollars just the day before the accident.

It was about a month after Arnold's death that some of the boys were gathered in Simon Bach's shack one night in a poker game. They had been paid off that afternoon, and they were all flush with money. Those who had families to support were conspicuous by their absence, as the greater part of their wages already had been traded in the commissary which Simon ran in connection with the mill.

These pay day poker games in Simon's shack were a regular thing. The mill owner was a good player, with a typical poker player's face, and he often cleaned out the bunch. He made a joke of it and said it helped him run his business. But occasionally one of the boys was the lucky man. Like flies to the sugar bowl, they always came back hoping for this chance.

On those occasions when Simon lost, he went for days afterward, steeped in melancholy, speaking seldom and sadly. It was the boys' turn to joke him then, as they always said of him that he was so close he would squeeze a nickel till the buffalo grunted. They liked the big, solemn-faced mill man, and they agreed among themselves that his weakness for gambling, among all his exemplary qualities, was the one thing that made him really human.

On this night, Pete Wade and his two buddies, Joe Topper and Sam

White, also drivers, were among the players. Sam had brought a new pack of cards, with which they were playing. He was a stocky young fellow with light hair, that curled closely about his head. He was inclined to be morose and sour-tempered; but he was a good driver and Joe and Pete were drawn to him by their common calling. The three batched together, and Sam was the best cook. He was proud of his art, and Pete and Joe were quite willing for him to display his skill as often as he liked.

Joe Topper, a sunny-tempered young giant, with an ever-ready laugh, began winning almost from the first. Pete and Sam, on the other hand, were steady losers. In two hours time Pete had lost almost all the money he had.

Then, suddenly, at something he had observed, Pete grew tense, and he kicked Sam sharply under the table. Sam jumped, dropping some of his cards and, as he recovered them, he scowled at Pete, grinding his teeth, as was a habit of his when in a vicious mood. After he had played his hand, he rose from the table, announcing that he was cleaned.

Joe laughed aloud as he carelessly dropped another handful of bills and silver into his hat, which he had placed on the floor beside his chair, and Sam, halfway to the door, turned and scowled at him.

ABOUT half an hour later, Pete lost the last dollar he had and followed Sam to their one-room shack. The three drivers slept in bunks built against the walls and cooked on a small stove that thrust its pipe out through the roof. Sam was lying on his bunk, fully dressed. Crossing the room until he stood above him, Pete said:

"Sam, you dirty polecat, what do you mean by what you done?"

Sam scowled up at him. "An' what do you think I done?"

"You cheated. I seen you!"

"Would you swear you seen me cheatin'?"

"Well, it looked to me like you was; but I'll let you explain what you was doin' with them cards."

Pete Wade felt a sense of outrage toward this man whom he had regarded as his friend, in spite of his surly disposition. Though not a heavy man, Pete was tall and broad and wiry. His clean-cut tanned face was open and frank and rather thoughtful, but with a ready smile.

He had expected Sam to resent physically his accusation, and he had intended to give Sam an unmerciful thrashing. But Sam only continued to scowl at him and, settling into one of his morose silences, refused even to answer his questions. Pete bitterly gave his shack-mate his unstinted opinion of any one who would take advantage of a friendly game, where everybody else was honest, then he undressed and went to bed.

He seemed to have been asleep only a few minutes when he was awakened by some one stirring in the room. Sam was standing near his own bunk, his back turned. In the light of the kerosene lamp on the table, Pete lay watching him beneath half-closed lids. After a glance in his direction, evidently feeling sure that he was still asleep, Sam drew from the pocket of his trousers a handful of paper money, crumpled and wadded together, and began straightening it out, placing one bill on top of the other.

"Where'd you git all that money?" Pete asked sharply.

Sam started and half turned toward

him. "What's that to you?" he growled.

"Thought you said at the game you was cleaned."

But Sam refused to talk further. He finished smoothing out the bills, then rolled them up and thrust them back into his pocket. Again, fully dressed, he lay down on his bunk.

"Put out that light," Pete said presently. "I can't sleep with it a shinin' in my face." But it was not the light that was keeping him awake.

When Sam neither answered him nor stirred, he himself got up and blew out the lamp.

Hours later, he was awakened by Sam rushing across the room and flinging wide the door. Faintly, from the direction of the mill came the sound of excited voices. Finding a match, Pete lighted the lamp, then drew on his trousers over the underclothes in which he had been sleeping, slipped his feet into his heavy shoes and followed.

It was that darkest hour before dawn; but a thick sprinkling of stars in the heavens made shadowy forms visible. On the log ramp there was a cleared space of perhaps fifty feet between the logs down next to the mill and those higher up on the slope. In this space a little knot of men were gathered about a man lying on his face.

In the midst of the group was the fireman, and he was explaining again, as Pete arrived, how, coming down, as usual, to get up steam in the boiler he had noticed that a big log had got loose and rolled down the ramp, losing its direction, as logs will when unguided, so that by the time it had brought up against those next the mill it was aslant and considerably out of line with the other logs. Investigating, he found this man lying dead, where he had been crushed by the rolling timber. Judging from his position, and the way he was lying, he must have been sitting on the log when it started rolling, and had been caught. It was not until some one struck a match and bent close to the blood-smeared face that Pete knew it was Joe Topper.

The men stood there stupidly, staring, listening at the garrulous fireman as he began again to recite his story of the discovery, when they were joined by Simon. He said to them:

"Let's git him inside, boys. Let's take him up to his shack."

He turned the body over and would have lifted the head and shoulders in his great arms; but, thrusting forward, Sam shoved him aside and himself lifted his former shack-mate. The weight was almost too much for him and one of the others, taking hold of an arm, helped him, while a third lifted the dead man's feet.

PETE WADE, shocked, numbed, seemed to be in a kind of stupor. He could not realize that this lifeless weight the others were carrying was his friend, the handsome, carefree young giant with the happy, boisterous laugh, whom he had last seen so hilariously elated over his winnings at the poker table. Stumbling blindly along, he only half heard Simon as he told the others:

"Me an' him set in for an hour after all the others left; but he cleaned me clean. Then, 'bout one o'clock, he said he was goin' to turn in. He must have come by the mill, an' set down on that there log, as Jake says, an' it got to rollin' with him. This is the best log yard in Alabama, an' we put the mill down where it is because we got sich a good slope to roll 'em down; but somethin' has got to be did. It won't do to let it go on killin' up folks

this way, even ef it is their own carelessness."

After they had placed all that remained of the young driver on his bunk, some one suggested that they should take the money he had won at the poker game from his pockets and give it for safe keeping to Simon, against the time when it could be turned over to Joe's married sister, his nearest kin.

They all agreed to this; but they held back, silent, thoughtful, no one taking the initiative, until the sawyer at the mill, a quiet little man said: "I'll do it." There was an audible sigh of relief as he began going through Joe's pockets.

"Why, they ain't nothin' on him but these here three nickels," he announced suddenly, turning about. "An' from what you boys say he must have left the game with nigh a thousand dollars." Again he searched. "Nope," with finality, "that's all. How was he totin' it, Simon?"

"In his britches pocket. He had been puttin' his winnin's in his hat on the flo'. When we quit, he set the hat on the table an', without countin' the money, he jest balled up the greenbacks an' shoved 'em in his right hand britches pocket. Then he gathered up the silver—two handfuls of it—an' put it in his left hand britches pocket. I remember he remarked: 'Ef I was to fall in the creek, I'd sho' sink with all this here weight in my clothes,' an' he laughed out loud, as you've heard him do a thousand times."

"Maybe he hid it some place for safe keepin'," the fireman said.

As this seemed the only logical explanation, they accepted it, and, with lantern and torch, forthwith started a search. But the search proved fruitless.

Joe's remains were taken away by his relatives to a little town twenty miles distant. Both Pete and Sam attended the funeral and were pallbearers. Pete was greatly distressed over the loss of his friend, and he broke down completely as the coffin was lowered into its last resting place. But Sam, morose, sullen, maintained a stoic calm. The man seemed to have sunk completely within himself, with scarcely a word for anybody.

Pete and Sam returned to their work driving the logging drays for Simon. One of the mill hands, who also was a driver, was given Joe's old team, and Pete never could see the nodding heads of the mules coming into the woods for a load without a lump rising in his throat. He and Sam still occupied the shack together; but they seldom spoke. After supper, Sam would sit in a brooding silence, smoking his pipe, and Pete, leaving the shack, would loaf about the commissary until bedtime with some of the other men.

With all the power of his will he was fighting a suspicion that he knew had lain dormant in his mind even before he would give it recognition. Then, his resolve breaking down, the unwelcome suspicion had grown into the belief that Sam had been responsible for Joe's death.

ONCE the belief had taken possession of him, he found so many things to lend it credence: Sam's effort to retrieve his fortune on the night of the poker game by cheating; his statement that he was cleaned, when he still had considerable money in his pocket; the fact that he had not undressed on the night of Joe's death and, evidently awake, had rushed out at the first cry of discovery. Sam's increasing taciturnity must be the effect

of a guilty conscience. He must have first killed Joe and robbed him and then, dragging him onto the ramp, had rolled the log over him to obliterate the sign of any other injury; or else he had inveigled Joe to the log ramp and then deliberately started the log.

Pete took to watching Sam covertly, and he thought that Sam knew he was suspected. The tension became unbearable, and at last, Pete quit his job and left. But he intended to catch Sam, to trap him, to lure him into an attempted repetition of his crime.

With this in view, he sold a small farm that had been left him by his father for eight hundred dollars cash. The money in his pocket, he returned for a visit to the mill. It was late in the afternoon when he arrived and he sat waiting until the drays came in with their last load of logs. He watched Sam as he unfastened his buck chain and unloaded, then he sauntered up to him.

"Hello, Sam," he called out pleasantly.

"Hi," Sam replied without cordiality.

"Sam, I sold my little farm I been tellin' you about."

Still the other man paid little attention to him, but, his dray emptied of logs, continued wrapping his chains about the coupling pole.

"Got eight hundred cash for it."

Sam turned with a jerk and stared at him. "What'd you do with the money?"

"Oh, I got it right here in my jeans," and Pete patted his hip pocket, in which he carried the money in a long wallet.

"Ain't you got no better sense?"

"I reckon I can take care of it. I'm lookin' around for some sort of proposition that seems good to put it in."

"Stayin' here to-night?" Sam asked.

"Yes; I'll be around two-three days, I reckon."

"Comin' up to the shack? Yo' bunk's still there."

"Nope. I'm stayin' with Simon."

With unwonted eagerness Sam came up to him and said:

"Ain't no use in that. You stay in my shack. Come on to the lot with me while I take out."

"Thanks; but I'll jest stay with Simon."

"Go to hell, then!" Sam told him savagely, and he ground his teeth as he swung onto his saddle mule and called to his team.

Pete, looking after him, chuckled mirthlessly to himself. "Give himself plumb away on the first go-round," he muttered. "I'll fix the murderer 'fo' I git through with him."

Simon had just ridden in on horseback from the woods. Pete walked over and greeted him. In his solemn manner the mill owner shook hands with him and told him how glad he was to see him.

"Ef it won't be puttin' you out none, Simon, I'll stay with you to-night, an' while I'm here. I've got a very private matter that I want you to help me on."

"You ain't gone an' got yo'self into trouble, have you, Peter?"

"No; but I'm fixin' to stew up trouble for somebody else, I'm thinkin'."

"In course I'll be glad to have you. Let me give my hoss to one of the boys to put up an' we'll go over an' wash an' fix us up a little snack."

After supper, which was eaten on the deal table in the lean-to kitchen and, together, they had washed and dried the dishes, Pete sat down again and motioned Simon to a seat. The night was

very warm, and though the one small window was wide, both men were perspiring.

"LET'S go outside on the gallery," Simon remonstrated. "It's hot as tarnation in here."

"No," Pete told him. "I don't want to run no chance of bein' overheard in what I'm goin' to tell you." So Simon, too, sat down, and he began:

"Simon, I believe I know who killed Arnold Few an' Joe Topper."

"For the Lord's sake!" the big mill owner gasped, his eyes growing wide. "Who do you think it could have been, Peter, an' why do you think so?"

When Pete had told him of all the things that had led him to suspect Sam, Simon sadly shook his head.

"I reckon you was in a better shape to jedge than anybody else, Peter. But who'd have thought it? Why, you and Joe and Sam was jest like brothers."

"Didn't you ever suspect him?"

"No," Simon replied slowly, shaking his head. "I believed, as I thought everybody else did, that a log had got loose by accident an' rolled on Joe. It never did even enter my head that any of our boys around here would do sich a thing. At first, I sort of suspected that there fireman of havin' taken the money out of Joe's pockets when he found him dead. But I been watchin' him an' his folks close, an' I don't see no evidence of any money bein' spent. I had about give up the idea. But Sam! I'd never have thought the boy could do it."

"I believe I'm goin' to be able to prove him guilty."

"What's yo' plan?"

Pete closed the door. Then, making certain that he could not be observed through the one small window, he drew from his pocket the long wallet and placed it on the table.

"In this," he said, "is eight hundred dollars cash, which I got from the sale of my farm. It's the bait. An' this," he added, placing beside the wallet a flat automatic, "is the medicine, ef I git cornered."

Simon lifted the pocketbook and thumbed the edges of the bills. He opened it a little and read the large denomination of some of them. Replacing it on the table, he asked:

"An' you're goin' to tell Sam you got all that money on you?"

"I've done told him. An' he plumb gave himself away. He got excited right off, an' he insisted on my stayin' with him up at the shack while I'm here. Oh, he's made up his mind to git my money, all right."

"But I don't see how you're goin' to prove anything on him 'bout what he done in—in the other cases."

"Well, he won't shoot me or try to knife me, because that would be discovered. He'll probably try to use a canthook as a club, as I believe he done with the others, with the idea of rollin' a log over me afterward to destroy the sign. But I'll be watchin' him. I'll hold him up for attempted murder, an' in the light of what's already happened, an' with the circumstantial evidence which has already convinced me he's guilty, he won't stand no show in a trial. It may not work, but I'm goin' to give it a chance. If he presses me too close, I'm goin' to kill him. That would give me mo' satisfaction, anyhow. Joe Topper was the best friend I ever had, an' I've thoroughly made up my mind that he was murdered, an' I'm here to git the man who done it!"

The tanned cheeks of the big mill owner had visibly paled. Shifting uneasily in his chair, he said hoarsely:

"Sho, now, Peter, you're plumb bloodthirsty!"

"I'm goin' up to his shack now."

"Don't do it! Don't do it!" Simon hastily interposed. "Stay where you're at an' let him alone."

But with a further hardening of his sternly grave young face, Pete rose from the table, replaced the money and pistol in his pocket, secured his hat and set out for Sam's shack.

Keenly alert, he carefully picked his way, watching the shadows, keeping away from buildings and other objects behind which some one might hide and disable him by a sudden blow in the dark. Once he was sure that he heard footsteps following him and whirled about, drawing his pistol. In a nervous tremor he crouched close to the ground, waiting. But it proved to be only a mule that was straying about the plant.

SAM was seated in the door of his shack smoking his pipe, the yellow glow of the little kerosene lamp behind him. When he saw who it was that had come to call, he rose hastily.

"Come in, Pete," he invited cordially. "I'm sho glad you drapped by." Leading the way into the shack, he placed a chair for his guest and dropped into another. He was very friendly and made an effort at cheerfulness, and Pete watched with scornful interest his attempts at conversation—this sullen, taciturn man, whom he and Joe often had told laughingly that he was about as talkative as a stump.

But presently Sam's nature prevailed and he dropped into moody silence. The burden of the conversation was now with Pete, and the strain was telling. To sit there chatting in apparent friendliness with the man he believed to be his friend's murderer was almost more than he could stand. Then Sam broke in upon some casual remark:

"Pete, you still got that money with you?"

"Yes." His mouth suddenly had gone dry.

"Pete, you goin' to stay here with me, ain't you?"

"No, I—I'm puttin' up with—with Simon. An' I reckon I b-better be goin'."

But as he rose from the chair, Sam rose also and stood between him and the door. "No; you got to stay here with me!"

For a moment Pete was terror-stricken. He wondered if the time had come; if, here in the shack, was going to be enacted the scene for which he had prepared himself, and at first his only impulse was to dash by the man, through the open door, and flee for his life. But in a moment he had recovered his poise. Making certain that a chair stood between him and Sam, he held his right hand ready to whip the pistol from his hip pocket.

"No," he said, as casually as he could, "I promised Simon I'd be right back. He'll be lookin' for me."

And then he realized that Sam's attitude was not threatening, but conciliatory. Pleadingly, he was saying, "Jest for old time's sake, Pete, bunk with me up here. We'll go tell Simon."

"Got to go," Pete replied, rather breathlessly; and, brushing by the other man, left the shack, breathing a sigh of thankfulness when he was on the outside. "G'night," Sam called from the doorway.

"Didn't even git mad an' grind his teeth at me," Pete muttered as he set off down the path. "He's got somethin' up his sleeve, all right." At a

little distance, he stopped and looked back at the shack.

And while he stood there, the light which streamed through the open doorway was suddenly blotted out. Sam had put out the lamp. The rising moon was just visible through the feathery tops of distant pines, and by this uncertain light he was sure that the next moment he saw a shadow detach itself from the neighborhood of the shack, only to blend with that of some trees in the rear.

"Well," he muttered grimly, "ef that's his game, I'll give him a chance to play it."

He drew his pistol, now, and held it close against his hip, ready to whirl and present it at a moment's notice. Slowly, he made his way along, and noisily, so that he could be easily followed, even whistling a little now and then.

HE had worked himself up to that state where he hoped that something would happen, felt that he would fly into a thousand pieces if it did not. Instead of going directly to Simon's shack, he turned into the log yard. As was usual at the close of a day's work, there was a space between the logs down near the mill and those higher up on the ramp. Examining these last, he saw they had been carefully chocked to prevent their rolling. The teams, on their last trip, unloaded in this open space, and the upper logs would be rolled down the next morning only in case those next the mill were sawed up before any more came in from the woods. There were four small top logs, that would make only two-by-sixes, then a great butt cut, twenty-seven feet long, from which would be manufactured eight-by-sixteen stringers, which one of the mill hands had told him were being cut for the new trestle down at the dam.

Seating himself on the end of one of the logs, he waited, expecting the shadow he had seen, or thought he had seen, to materialize into Sam, following him in order that he might murder and rob him and then crush his body into a broken, shapeless mass beneath a log. "It would be necessary," he thought, "first to roll these four smaller logs down the slope."

He could see himself lying there after the big log had been rolled over him, flattened and dead, as those others had been, hear the first cry at the discovery of his body the next morning. The grim associations of the place began to eat at his nerves. In constant alarm at slight night sounds, he was turning his head this way and that, his pistol raised, ready to shoot. With the sleeve of his denim shirt he wiped the clammy sweat from his forehead. Presently the moon was swept behind driven clouds, and at the sudden darkness he leaped to his feet. Almost in a run he reached Simon's shack.

"That you, Peter!" the mill owner called from his room through the open door as he ran up the steps to the front gallery, upon which opened the two bedrooms. "'Scuse me for turnin' in so early: but, as you know, I has to stir extry soon of mornin's."

With a murmured reply, Pete entered the room where he was to sleep, Arnold Few's old room. A door from this led into the lean-to kitchen. Simon frugally used only one lamp, and this he had brought in and it was burning on the mantel over the fireplace. Here, in its lights, was sanctuary. Trembling, with a sigh of thankfulness, Pete sank down on the edge of the bed. He still held the pistol in his hand; but he now thrust it back into his pocket.

Closing the door, he fastened it with the wooden button. After undressing, he had a desire to leave the lamp burning, and he would have felt safer with the window closed. But, a little shamefaced, he blew out the lamp and, leaving the wooden shutter of the window wide, he crawled into bed, first having placed the pocketbook containing the eight hundred beneath his pillow.

Presently a sense of security came over him. It was generally known that Simon was a light sleeper, and often he arose and wandered about the little plant at night. Though a peaceful, gentle-mannered man, he was feared for his great strength, which was proverbial. No one would dare to bother him while sleeping in a room next to Simon, with the door open between them. At last he slept.

SIMON called him very early in the morning. At least, it seemed early to Pete; but as he had no watch, he could not tell just what time it was. Already the mill owner had a fire going in the kitchen and had made a pot of coffee.

Through the light that came in from the kitchen, Pete dressed, then went to the water-shelf just outside the kitchen door and washed his face. When he came in again, Simon had poured his cup of steaming coffee.

"It ain't nigh daylight," the mill owner said; "but I likes to git out an' mosey 'round an' see that things is shipshape."

"No wonder you makes money, while lots of mill men don't hardly make a livin'," Pete said admiringly. "You sho do watch yo' business."

"It pays not to take no chances," Simon replied, smiling.

Pete drained his cup and, turning, saw that Simon was standing, waiting for him. He had on his wide-brimmed black hat. Pete also rose. Leaning, Simon blew out the little lamp. "We'll go out this way," he said, and Pete, who was nearer the outside door of the kitchen, turned to lead the way.

Then suddenly, from behind, great arms were thrown about him in an embrace that pinioned his own arms to his sides and squeezed the breath from his body.

His efforts to struggle were useless. He tried to cry out; but, with no breath in his lungs, made only a feeble noise. There was no other sound. Nothing. From out the darkness of the room had come those great arms like steel bars across his chest, tightening, slowly tightening. His lungs were crushed in, he felt that his heart had stopped, and he knew that his ribs were bending, until presently they must snap like so many reeds. The uncertain light from the clouded moon that had come in through the door was blotted out. The life was leaving his body. He knew it. He could feel it go.

Then, as suddenly as it had come, the pressure was released, the great arms slipped from about him. Staggering forward, he caught himself against the table. Leaning there, he drew the air back into his lungs, painfully, gaspingly, like some animal that has been run almost to death.

A match flared and the lamp was lighted. Turning dazed eyes, he saw Simon lying in a heap on the floor, the blood trickling from beneath the edge of his hat, which still was on his head. Above him leaned Sam, a big revolver gripped in his hand.

"Sam," he panted, sinking into a chair, "he was killin' me. Simon was squeezin' me to death!"

"I know it. I been watchin'. I was expectin' it."

"You knew that he would do this thing?"

But Sam had lapsed into one of his morose silences and did not reply. He was scowling down at the huddled form on the floor, prodding it with his foot, grinding his teeth.

Presently, however, he looked up at the white face of the shaken man in the chair, and his own face softened.

"Why, Pete," he said. "Pete, you're almost dead! I like to've been too late."

Placing the heavy pistol on the table, he brought in the water bucket from the shelf and, with the end of the dish towel, bathed Pete's face. With a tenderness that was surprising, he smoothed Pete's hair, holding his head against his body as he bent above him.

"Pete, I—I'd have hated to've been too late. I'd have hated to lose you, too."

His head leaning against Sam's chest, Pete could feel the man's body shake convulsively. Turning, he saw that Sam was crying, the tears running down his cheeks, his ugly, pudgy face twisting and grimacing. "Why, Sam!" he said, rising. "Why, Sam!"

SAM flung himself into a chair. As if this sudden, overwhelming emotion because of his friend's narrow escape had swept away the barrier that always had held him undemonstrative, glum, tight-lipped, he began speaking rapidly, almost incoherently, so that Pete, standing beside him, his hand resting on his shoulder, had to bend his head to catch the flow of words:

"You an' Joe was the only friends I ever had, the only ones who would ever put up with me. I been kicked an' cuffed about since I was a little shaver. You ain't been none too friendly of late; but ef you—ef I had been too late, this here world wouldn't have held nothin' mo' for me. Simon's been robbin' us at the cards all along. When anybody won, it was because he let 'em. As you know, I brought in new packs twice. But he'd nick the new cards with his thumbnail. I seen him that last night, an' I was tryin' to shuffle out the nicked card when you seen me an' thought I was cheatin'. I left; but 'fo' I did, I taken out a handful of bills from Joe's hat that was on the flo' 'tween his chair an' mine, because I figured Simon would git it 'fo' he left. That was the money you seen me with—which I've since give to his sister. I waited up for Joe that night to give it to him, an' didn't even take off my clothes. I had jest drapped off to sleep when they found him dead, an' hollered.

"Simon claimed that Joe had left his shack with the money he had won; but I didn't believe it. I waited, an' I watched careful, after the next pay day. I was standin' in the commissary when Buck Jones opened his envelope an' laid on the counter a two-dollar bill, callin' for a drink. I recognized that bill instant. It was what I had been watchin' for. It was one that once belonged to me. You know, a two-dollar bill is unlucky unless you tears off the co-ner. I had tore off the corner of this one, an' in tearin' it my hand had slipped an' I tore it, in a jagged line, almost down to the middle. Joe had won it from me in the poker game. I give change for the bill an' took it off the counter. It was the same. I had Simon, then. I knowed I had him by the evidence of that there bill I had tore jest for luck. He taken it from Joe, with the other money, an' used it to pay off the men. I been bidin' my time, layin' to git him.

"When you come here with that money on you it skeered me nigh crazy. I follered you from my shack last night an' set down under yo' window. Along in the night, Simon riz an' went out on the log yard. He rolled down four small logs, then chocked a big twenty-seven-footer, so's it could be easy moved. Then he come back here an' made a fire in the stove.

"I knowed he was gittin' ready to fix you an' rob you, then roll the log over you; but I didn't know how he aimed to start about it. When yo' come in here, I clumb through the window an' was standin' jest inside the do' there, my pistol ready. After you had drank the coffee, it sudden come over me that he was druggin' you. Then he blowed out the lamp, an' I moved in behind him. When he grabbed you, I raised my gun to shoot him; but he had his head bent over, below the level of yourn. He was goin' to crush you to death in his arms, an' it couldn't be told after he had rolled the log over you. I hit him with my gun. I hit him hard as God would let me. I know I killed him. He's dead—dead an' in hell; but I like to been too late! I know I'll die for it; but I meant to kill him. I'm glad he's dead!"

And this was the man whom Pete had expressed a desire to kill, because he had thought him guilty of his friend's murder, and of planning to take his life for the sake of the money in his pocket!

Bending above Simon's body, he saw that the big mill owner was dead. And though he strove conscientiously against the feeling, he could not, in the light of all that had happened, help feeling a satisfaction that it was so. Turning to Sam, he told him:

"Sam, you mustn't say that you're glad he's dead. You mustn't feel that way in takin' a human life. We know, now, that he was a murderer, an' that he would have gone on murderin' folks as he had been doin'. You had to kill him, in order to save my life. An' you're not goin' to suffer for this, Sam. I'll see that you don't! But we'll have to tell the others, an' you'll have to go an' give up to the sheriff. I'll go with you, Sam, an' I'll stay with you."

"An' you won't leave me alone with —with them sheriff folks?"

"I'll never leave you so long as I live, Sam. I swear it!"

Like two small boys going out into the dark, these two men, gripping hands, went out to rouse the others.

THE END.

Hunting Buffaloes in the U. S. To-Day

YOU can still hunt buffaloes in the United States to-day. That is, you can if you are a citizen of the State of Arizona and are very lucky. Each year Arizona gives permission to ten of its citizens to kill ten buffaloes in the State herd at Houserock Valley. So great is the demand for the permits that it is necessary to hold a public drawing and select the ten names by chance from the hundreds of applications. The buffaloes are killed in order to keep the herd within set limits. *Vincent B. Wilson.*

"Hurry!" Mary Sue urged. "Get me to the door, quick!"

Backwater

A Mississippi flood mocks the puny passions of fighting men behind the Arkansas levees

By T. S. STRIBLING

Author of "East Is East," etc.

LEADING UP TO THIS INSTALLMENT

JIM MURDOCK, returning from agricultural college to his plantation near the Mississippi at Ringerman, Arkansas, finds that his stubborn old father, Bill Jack Murdock, is still the distiller and bootlegger for the whole Ringerman country.

Jim pleads with him to give it up, for they have the plantation and more money than any one else in the county. But old Bill Jack voices his curious code—he claims he is doing the community a service by selling stuff that won't poison anybody; that it gives him great influence in the county, a voice in politics and public improvements. As a conscientious man, he has to do his duty, he says, rather than let unscrupulous moonshiners poison his friends, who would drink anyway.

Jim has trouble with Deputies Ladderbury and Himes over a steer in-

This story began in the Argosy for January 4.

fected with Texas fever which he is studying in the hope of curing it. But at last it dies, and he has the mulatto Pontus Pilt burn it, according to law. But a "poor white trash" neighbor, Leck Davis, claims that the Murdocks are trying to infect the local cattle and buy them up cheap.

The adjoining plantation is owned by Winchell Meredith, cotton man and bank stockholder, whom old Bill Jack Murdock had worsted in a boundary dispute. Jim loves his daughter, Mary Sue; but she tells him that while she loves him she cannot marry him—his father is outside the law, his background is not cultured or aristocratic.

Taking refuge in a Murdock barn from one of the downpours that are flooding the countryside, Jim and Mary Sue find Ed Purvis, absconding cashier of the Ringerman Bank. Mary Sue tells him she must inform the authorities; and little Purvis goes out into the storm.

Jim learns his father was helping Purvis, who had once befriended him; and so he goes to see Meredith, for Mary Sue had decided she must at least tell her father. Bill Jack Murdock agrees to lend Meredith five thousand dollars—his loss through Purvis's peculations—in consideration of his keeping quiet about the cashier's presence. Then Jim learns that Mary Sue hadn't told her father or any one, but that Ned Nevis, the Merediths' college boy house guest, had, as a prank, set deputies on the Murdock land with a bloodhound, on a wild guess that Purvis was still around.

That night, in the swamp, much to his surprise, Jim sees the Merediths' negro, Poindexter, carrying Purvis to a hiding place, foiling the bloodhound. The river is rising steadily, and backwater is flooding some of the land.

The deputies, convinced that Purvis is being sheltered by Bill Jack Murdock and that they are being done out of a reward, arrest the old bootlegger at Squire Mathis's dance, disgracing Jim.

Jim comes home, determined to leave Ringerman and his father, much as he hates to do so, in some ways. He gets a warning, first from Pontus Pilt's gossip, and then from Deputy Ladderbury, that a mob of white trash are planning to do what the law won't—punish Bill Jack Murdock for his bootlegging and wealth and independence in the matter of the steer and the supposed concealment of Ed Purvis. Old Bill Jack bluntly refuses Jim's advice to stay away from home. "I ain't the sort that lays low, 'y gannies. If my neighbors want to find me, they know where I'm at!"

CHAPTER XIII. (*Continued*).

GATHERING STORM.

JIM watched his father leave, with a hope that business would keep the old man away from any unpleasantness that might be brewing. Then young Murdock turned back to the house, with the different possibilities of the situation moving through his head.

If a crowd of men did indeed visit their home and attack or warn them to leave the county, this would be the final stroke to any tenuous hope he might still have of winning Mary Sue.

Murdock tried to convince himself that he had given up Mary Sue anyway; but at this threatened degradation, this open sign of the disapproval of the neighborhood, a kind of desperation filled the youth. He thought of meeting the men himself and arguing with them. But there was no way to

meet them. He did not know when they would come or how. Perhaps singly, perhaps in couples; he did not know.

Jim went back upstairs to his packing. About him lay small articles to be stuffed into the cracks and crevices of his boxes. He picked up a gold-plated bridle bit which he had once won riding at a county fair. He sat with it in his fingers, thinking.

If he went West, the bad odor of his departure would be lost in the Elephant Butte region. His past life would be erased. He would merely be another man in the West whose social antecedents dated no farther back than the day he crossed the Mississippi River Valley.

A car thrumming in second along the muddy road caught the youth's attention. It stopped at the Murdock front gate. Jim Murdock dropped the plated bit and got up quickly. He stood listening, hardly knowing whether to brace himself for a contest of reason or a conflict of strength. He moistened his lips like a man about to make a speech, then went downstairs and looked out the front door at an angle.

An empty motor was idling in the road. It was a big car, large enough to take eight or ten passengers. The youth moved around the middle of his room trying to see who were coming up his walk. To his surprise, the path from the gate to the door was empty.

Then it occurred to him that his visitors were concealing themselves behind his bushes and trees and barn. It was to be not a warning to the Murdocks, but a raid. He had a shaken feeling that the customary thing for him to do was to get his rifle. At the same time he saw the absurdity of arming himself against a posse.

Back behind the nervous indecision of how to meet the men who were surrounding his home ran the thought of Mary Sue Meredith. How would she think and feel about this attack? How would she regard it, no matter what he did or how it ended?

There came a knock on his front door.

All thought of arming himself vanished from Murdock's mind. His whole inner force focussed itself for a moral resistance. He would show his neighbors his side of the matter. Here he opened the door and stepped out on the porch.

Jim stared at the figure he saw with a fantastic feeling that the rough faces of the McAdams's store gang had changed and melted into the features of Mary Sue Meredith.

He called her name in amazement.

"Jim," hurried the girl in a frightened voice, "a crowd of men are coming here on horses. I saw 'em pass home!"

"Yes, I know they are."

"Then why don't you go way? What are you staying here for?"

"Why, there's no use going away—they'd come again."

"I doubt it."

"Then I think I'm staying here on your account."

"On my account!" Mary Sue's voice was incredulous, and she pulled at his arm with a suggestion of flight.

"I was thinking how you might feel about it, Mary Sue—chased out of the neighborhood by a mob. But then, it's just as bad to have them come at all."

"Why, I wouldn't feel anything about it. I know your part in it. You've been decent and fine. But go, Jim—don't let them find you here!"

"Mary Sue, I'm going anyway in a few days, but I don't want to leave

home by being chased off by the neighbors."

"LOOK here, that's silly. You don't know what those men will do, and neither do they. And, besides, I thought you were wonderfully brave at the dance the other night. I couldn't have stood up there as you did if my father—" She broke off with her lips apart, looking intently into his face lest she had hurt his feelings.

"Well, I wasn't brave at all," denied Jim unhappily. "I felt as if I were marched up between the officers. I felt as if I were standing down there looking at myself up on the porch, and that part of me the officers had arrested was ashamed of that part of me standing on the porch. I don't suppose you can make heads or tails of what I'm trying to tell you."

"Get in my car and let's get away!"

"Where to?"

"Why, any direction. Toward Fayetteville, if you like."

"You mean you're going with me?"

"I'm going to get you out of here, Jim. Why, goodness, if I would keep quiet to help Ed Purvis, who is a thief, don't you know I'd cut my hands off for you?"

Something suddenly seemed to melt in Murdock's breast. He reached down and put his arms about the girl; kissed her.

"Mary Sue, go all the way with me," he pleaded. "Don't leave me, Mary Sue. I love you. Only stay with me and I don't care what happens."

She blinked her eyes and shook her head. "No, no, I can't. I wish I could. I told you I wished I could!" She suddenly returned his kisses vehemently, putting her palms beside his face, kissing his mouth, his eyes. Then abruptly she began pulling him by the arm toward the gate. "Come on, quickly, Jim—let's go!"

Jim Murdock was as unwilling to go away as was his father.

"Where are we going?"

"I don't know. I'll get you away from here."

"We can't get out for the backwater!"

"We can drive up the Lonoke road; it isn't flooded."

He moved with her grudgingly down the path. And now it suddenly seemed to him that the Jim Murdock whom the officers had arrested was filled with utter scorn for the Jim Murdock who had stood on the porch and was now fleeing.

"No. Listen, Mary Sue," he said thickly, "I can't run off and leave pap like this. I've got to stay."

"But your father isn't here. The men will come and find nobody. They'll go away and be through. They'll never come back. They'll never get the excitement up again."

The youth hesitated a moment longer. He looked back at the farmhouse, at the pear tree with its wet black bark, with a painful sense of desertion. Yet this was the only rational thing to do. He had made the same argument to his father—simply let the men come, find nothing, and go away.

He could not walk fast enough for Mary Sue. She kept a step ahead, pulling at his sleeve.

Once Jim asked in a tortured voice: "Why do you do all this? You won't marry me!"

"Haven't I told you over and over!" she exclaimed unhappily. They reached the motor. Mary Sue leaped in and pressed the starter.

"Get on the back seat," she directed swiftly, evidently following some prearranged plan.

Murdock did as he was bid. The car was already under way, stepping up to the fastest speed the road allowed.

"When we see anybody on horseback," directed the girl, "lean back against the curtain; they can't see you through the glass."

A feeling of shame, like a physical pain, went through Murdock. He caught Mary Sue's shoulder. "Damn it, Mary Sue, this is worse than the other. You'll have to stop. Stop!"

She shook her shoulder with a sharp: "Lean back—yonder's one now."

"I'll be damned if I do it!"

"Jim!" she cried to the man behind her, "please—please be sensible!"

THE motor was swishing down a straight stretch of muddy road toward a horseman. All the passenger had to do was simply to lean back in the shadows of the curtains; a mere inclination of the body. Suddenly Mary Sue clamped on brakes and the car swished forward to a stop.

Murdock felt a queer surprise at this sudden shift in the girl's plan. He looked at her determined face, the set of her small aristocratic hands on the wheel. Then he heard her call out sharply and apprehensively: "Mr. Murdock! Oh, Mr. Bill Jack Murdock, where are you going?"

The short, powerful man on horseback twisted about in his saddle.

"Why, it's Miss Mary Sue. Why, I'm goin' home, Mary Sue." He fingered his hat with the vague, awkward manners of his class.

"Mr. Murdock," cried Mary Sue quickly, "I wouldn't go home if I were you—not right now."

"Why wouldn't ye?" inquired the old distiller simply.

"There are some men going to your house. They—they don't like you."

"Yeh, that's what I heard down the road," nodded the old man impassively.

"So why don't you stay away and let it blow over, Mr. Murdock? I drove down to tell you."

"Oh, you did!"

"Yes. Why not just stay away till they come and go? That'll be the end of it; they won't come any more."

"Listen, Miss Mary Sue," interrupted the old man brusquely. "All respect to you as a woman and to yore pappy as a man, but the Murdocks don't deal with onsatisfied neighbors like the Merediths would. So much obliged for the neighborliness that prompted you, but I don't allow no man nor gang of men to call at my house and not find me at home. Not if I know they're a comin'."

The old man fingered his hat vaguely once more, and kicked his horse into a canter toward his home.

CHAPTER XIV.

LYNCHING.

AS he rode home ahead of the motor old man Bill Jack Murdock sat his horse with solidity and certainty. Once he twisted about in his saddle, shook a finger at the motorists who were following him, and called back:

"'Y ganny, Jim'n Mary Sue, if a man's right, he's right, and he's bound to win regardless."

Evidently that was why he rode with such unguarded assurance. His moral position was impregnable.

The unconscious and intimate way he had coupled the names, "Jim'n Mary Sue," must have struck the girl as it did Jim Murdock, with a prophetic quality. In countryside fashion

Bill Jack had run the names so closely together that they were really one. "Jim'n Mary Sue." The way he said it whisked away their separateness. It made them a unit along with any number of such country couplings: Peter'n Jane Wilkerson; Harry'n Annie Luttrell; Tom'n Sally Lowry.

The girl colored faintly and after a moment said, in an odd tone: "He really believes he's right, Jim."

The son's thoughts came back anxiously to his father and the approaching mob.

"He always believes he's right. He thinks Providence, or luck, or something will protect him because he's right."

"But he knows he's acting against the law," ejaculated the girl.

"I know it, but to him, Mary Sue, the law is like another person, just an ordinary person. The law has its opinions and my dad has his. Sometimes the two agree, sometimes they don't."

The car moved slowly ahead, with the girl looking anxiously at the opinionated old man. As the motor crept after the horse along the muddy road a mass of dark clouds moved out of the west with smoky perpendicular lines dropping to the empty fields. Mary Sue looked at this approaching threat and cried out: "Thank goodness, there comes one rain this spring I'm thankful for."

"Why?"

"Maybe it'll keep the men away."

Young Murdock watched the curtain of rain with a sardonic humor; he could imagine the country folk looking at the sky and deciding it would be too bad a day to chase a neighbor out of the county.

Mary Sue pushed her motor up even with the horseman and rolled down the glass. "Mr. Murdock! Mr. Bill Jack! Look yonder—turn your horse loose and get in our car!"

The old man lifted an acknowledging hand.

"Thanks for the invite, Mary Sue, but rain's healthy. It toughens a man."

The next moment water fell about them in sheets. The noise of the rain on the car top cut off all communication with the horseman. It depressed the motorists even if old man Bill Jack's safety did depend, perhaps, upon this very downpour.

The water came down in such sluices that the windshield wiper could give only momentary glimpses of the outer world. They could distinguish the blurry outline of the horse and rider just ahead of them, and Mary Sue followed with her car.

The descending water gave Jim Murdock a sense of privacy with the girl that moved him even in the midst of his apprehension for his father. He laid a hand on the slender fingers on the wheel and said tentatively:

"Mary Sue, if dad believes so strongly in what he does, wouldn't that make some difference?"

"Oh, Jim. Not now, please," she begged.

MURDOCK became silent, a little abashed at mentioning the subject when his father might be in danger. He ought not to have mentioned it. But his thoughts somehow did not focus on his father's visitation. They drifted this way and that, and presently as he rode along peering through the streaming glass, a queer fancy visited the youth. It seemed somehow as if the rain were Time. His horseman father was riding on before in Time and he and Mary Sue were following in a motor car, and behind them

somewhere in this Time-rain, if he should turn to look, he might see his own and Mary Sue's son following—perhaps in a flying machine.

And all of them were lonely and lost in Time. They could barely see each other. The flying machine would creep after the motor and the motor creep after the horse. And no generation down the whole stretch of humanity ever really would see where they were going or know why they were going. But all followed the misty forms just ahead of them, doing what they did, going where they went.

There was a pathos and a truth about his fantasy that moved the youth. He wished he could tell it to Mary Sue. He wished he could have her feel with him this melancholy symbol of all life which, at that moment they were acting. But he could not put it into words. Indeed, as he looked wistfully at the girl, he found the very beginning of his thought had drifted from his mind. And Mary Sue, herself, no doubt, was pursuing some similar sad, vague reverie without beginning or end.

"Jim," asked the girl abruptly, "did your father have a gun on his saddle-bow?"

"I don't think so. Why do you ask?"

"I thought I caught a glimpse." She pointed through the glass; "there is one!"

Murdock stared. "Why, that isn't dad!"

"Goodness!" ejaculated Mary Sue in alarm, "have we got switched off to somebody else? No telling where he is leading us!"

The girl moved a degree faster and brought the figure of the horseman to her fender. At that moment the rain slacked off and a stretch of watery road became visible.

The automobile was rolling through water, toward the roof and the pear tree of the Murdock home. In the freshet just ahead of the motor rode three horsemen who, quite possibly, had been unaware of each other. Beyond the Murdock home half a dozen men on mules and horses approached from the other direction. In the lean-to garage beside the barn, Jim saw two or three horses already hitched.

Old man Bill Jack turned and looked at his two outriders.

"Well 'y gannies," he snorted, with a wag of his head, "I didn't know you boys was a ridin' alongside o' me."

Came an apprehensive pause as the two soaked horsemen glanced dubiously at each other.

"Us neither," they admitted wryly.

"Seems as we've got quite a little gath'rin' here," observed the old distiller, looking at the spokesman with his prominent reddened eyes.

The man glanced down the road. "Seems so."

Mary Sue turned with a colorless face.

"Jim, what are they going to do? How will we stop it?"

A nervous tightening came over the son's chest and legs and arms.

"Let me out at the gate, Mary Sue," he directed in staccato, "then you get on home as fast as you can go."

Mary Sue accelerated her car, signalled a faint cough on her horn for the riders to let her pass, and moved up to the gate. She stopped her car so nervously the bumper struck a fence post and bent it over.

"I'm sorry," she gasped.

"Back up before you start forward again," directed Jim shortly, and he opened the door and stepped out. Mary Sue slipped from under the steering wheel and was at his back. Murdock

glanced over his shoulder in amazement, then turned and tried to push her back in the car.

"MARY SUE," he gasped, through dry lips, "get on up the road—to your home!"

The girl scrambled out after his push as if she had not felt the set-back. "Maybe they won't do anything if there's a girl here," she whispered tensely, "a nice girl."

A quiver of exasperation went over Murdock. "For God's sake, Mary Sue, get on away from here!"

Again he pushed her back and once more she might have been a feather stuck to his fingers so instantly was she out again.

"Lift me over the water," she directed nervously. "Don't make me wade!"

He picked her up in a tremor of uncertainty and waded with her to the gate. The men in the road watched the proceeding. When the youth lifted the latch one of the horsemen said, "Mary Sue, I wouldn't go in that house!"

Another voice ordered, "Jim, don't you take that gal in that house!"

Mary Sue pinched Murdock's shoulder.

"Hurry—get me to the door, quick!"

As the youth waded along the water-covered path holding Mary Sue in his arms, his back crawled to the impact of a possible bullet. When Murdock placed Mary Sue in the doorway he heard his father at the gate.

"Come right on in, gentlemen. I heard you-all was a comin' so I rode back to meet ye."

"Oh, you knew we was a comin'?" interrupted the leader of the horsemen skeptically.

"Looky here, Leck Davis," snapped the old distiller, bellicosely, "of course I knowed you-all was a comin', and 'y gannies I never fail to meet anybody that wants to see me no matter how scummy they are." He waved a thick arm toward his door. "Walk on in, the house is open to you all."

The men hesitated. The hatchet-faced leader, Davis, drawled, "If you knowed we was a comin', I reckon you also know what we come fer?"

"Of course I do," nodded the old man irascibly, "and I tell you right now I don't allow no flea-bit stump-suckin' set o' men to be tellin' me how to run my business."

Jim Murdock slipped hurriedly from the porch and waded toward the gate.

"Pap," he called sharply, "don't start bemeaning the men till you know what they want."

"'Y gannies, I already know," cried the old man angrily, "and I don't allow no spindlin' set o' men headed by Leck Davis to come to—"

The leathery man interrupted this with a certain dignity, as an Arkansas lictor.

"Looky here, Bill Jack Murdock, we-all know what's been a goin' on here for years. After that dance last night we've come to stop it."

The old distiller wheeled stiffly off his horse and stood in the water. "Well, 'y ganny, if you knowed it year after year, what the Sam Hill you comin' here now fer?"

"Cause you're gettin' plumb out of reason," stated the custodian of conduct grimly. "The law won't stop it, so the people's got to do somethin'. The idyah, the law bein' so clogged up that for you to be seen handin' a man a bottle of liquor and receivin' a five dollar bill ain't no evidence a-tall that you sold him whisky." He turned to his fellows, "Ain't that right, boys?"

A chorus broke out, "Of course it's right! Shore it's right! We ain't such fools as a circuit jedge!"

"And besides makin' whisky, you been harborin' a thief."

"Ed Purvis," put in a voice.

"Texas fever steer—" added another.

Mary Sue suddenly called from the doorway in a shaking tone. "Listen, men, listen. Don't hold that Texas fever steer against Jim; he was trying to make a serum—"

The whole group of riders looked blankly at the girl, then one ejaculated in the voice of a man explaining to a mere woman, "Miss Mary Sue, don't let him fool ye. Folks don't make their serum. They buy hit in tubes."

OLD MAN MURDOCK stood solidly in the water with his feet set wide.

"Thunderation about the steer and the serum. What air you little keen-rumped mule drivers goin' to do about it?"

Jim Murdock, at the gate, reached toward his father. If he could hush him he believed the men would ride off and let them alone.

"Dad, stop railing at these men! Come on in the house," he pulled at his shoulder.

"Mind your own business," snorted the distiller.

"I tell you what we're going to do," snapped Davis. "We're givin' you warnin' to leave this county. If you ain't out in three days you'll tote the damnedest licking a man ever wore."

"Come on!" urged Jim.

"You cymlin'-headed fools!" cried the old man, "tellin' me I got to leave this county!"

The short man strode sharply through the water to the side of Davis's horse. He put one hand under the stirrup and gave a sudden mighty upward heave.

Davis yelled, struck at old man Bill Jack with his riding crop, tried to grab with his other hand, but he toppled backward from his saddle, fell headforemost on the other side and struck the water with a tremendous splash. His mount began rearing. The other horses fell into confusion, backing and wheeling away from the frightened animal.

The riders tried to unlimber the guns on their saddles. Old man Bill Jack jerked off his hat and began striking at the heads of the unruly animals to make them worse.

"Shoot, you spin'lin' scum!" he roared, "if you think I'm skeered of ye."

Jim Murdock quickly sizing up the situation, caught his father and wheeled him into the gate.

One of the riders got his horse under control and was swinging up his gun. At that moment Leck Davis dashed through the gate covered with mud and water. He yelled for his men to come on and made straight at the distiller. The short, powerful old man took two or three blows in the face, then succeeded in catching the leader by the collar and rushed him back toward the gate. He hammered Davis's thin hatchet-like face with his fists.

Jim Murdock grabbed his father and began hauling both men back toward the house.

"Don't knock him down!" he yelled. "Hold him up, so them damn men can't shoot you!"

"'Y gannies, lemme to 'em!" yelled the old man trying to wrench loose from his son's hold. "I'll show 'em they kain't—"

But Jim had the two men overbal-

anced. Davis was stumbling forward and his father stumbling backwards as Jim maneuvered the pair toward the porch.

One part of the young man's mind shrewdly warned him to keep Davis between his father and the guns; the other part squirmed at this typical country mêlée which had rushed upon him. It was the very spirit of the backwoods—shootings, a murder or two—with Mary Sue watching him.

The men at the gate, seeing they could not shoot because of Davis, leaped off their horses and came dashing through the water to their leader's aid.

Murdock flung back a look toward the house. He was about halfway to the porch. Next moment the gang was on him. A man struck at him across Davis's shoulder. Next moment Jim loosed Davis and drove a terrific swing at the man's lantern jaw. The jutting bone bit Jim's fist. The fellow's head cricked to one side and he slumped down into the water.

THE next instant a stunning blow fell on Jim Murdock's head; a flame leaped before his eyes and a gong of pain rang through his ears. The youth staggered back, but the sight of half a dozen men beating his short, struggling father lunged him forward again. He struck out at faces. He saw a club swinging on his father's head. He tried to guard the blow; he felt a heavy crash and his arm went numb.

In the confusion he saw a man driving at him with a jackknife. He tried to lift his dead arm, he made a terrible effort to throw up his arm and fend off the blade. Somebody grabbed him around the legs and he stumbled backwards. As he fell he flung a glance at the porch. He was within three steps of the door.

The next moment he was down in the water. Boots kicked him. He tried to lift his head out of the water, but the weight of cudgels and fists forced him under. Daggers of pain went through him as heels smashed into his stomach. He gasped for breath and got water instead. He strangled. He was blinded, struggling, strangling.

One of the legs that kicked him, he seized around the ankle with his good arm, got his head up and bit it in the calf. The next moment the *gollomb! gollomb! gollomb!* of an automatic shotgun gave a prolonged bellow in his ears.

Abruptly everything ceased pounding him. He felt nothing but the ache of his beating. He thought he must be shot. He wondered if he were dead and still ached. He wondered if the dead could ache?

The next moment a hand shook him, a shrill voice screamed in his ear.

"Get up, quick! Quick! While they're getting their guns!"

Murdock washed the muddy water out of his eyes and saw Mary Sue standing over him with an automatic shotgun still smoking in her hands.

He understood that the girl by a sudden sortie had driven the men back to their horses to get their own guns. At the sight of the girl, the fog cleared from Murdock's brain. He got himself up, thrust his good arm under the prone form of his father and he and Mary Sue waded and dragged him toward the door.

"Damn 'em! Damn 'em!" Jim wept with rage at the sight of his limp, powerful old father. "Oh, Mary Sue, I told you not to—"

"Get him in! Get him inside!" shrieked the girl, staring at the gate.

She pulled and Jim made a convulsive, powerful lift. The short, heavy form swung limply inside. Mary Sue slammed the door shut. Simultaneously came the hard crack of rifles from the gate. Bullets snapped through the shutter. Jim looked at the girl to see if she were shot. He dragged his father out of line with the door.

"Mary Sue, what did you come here for?"

"Why, if I hadn't been here you'd have been killed! They were kicking you — keeping you down under the water!"

Reports of guns and the snapping of bullets through the door hurried the besieged.

"Listen," planned Murdock, "slip out the back door quick, walk round to the public road—"

Here old man Murdock drew up his legs, groaned and got himself to a sitting posture. Then he wobbled to his feet, looked about with his muddy, bruised face.

"'Y ganny, I could 'a' licked them fellers if I'd ever got set!"

He started for the living room. Jim ran ahead of him to the rack of guns over the fireplace. As the youth leaped past the window, two or three guns cracked and panes splintered. He got to the rack, looked back to see if Mary Sue or his father was hurt. He motioned the girl toward the back door. She pointed at old Mr. Murdock's bleeding head.

"Damn it, you can't help that," he growled as he maneuvered the gun from the rack.

AT that moment came a pounding at the front door; the heavy crash of men, ramming the shutter with a beam. The door creaked, began to buckle, cracks split in it. Murdock fired through the door and the acrid odor of smokeless powder filled the room.

The pounding ceased and shots came in reply.

"Mary Sue," Jim snapped, "get up stairs—shut the trap door!"

The girl seized old man Murdock under the arms.

"Go on, girl, get yourself up!" Jim begged as he reached over to take hold of his dad.

"I'm not going to leave him!" flared the girl angrily. "Beating him, shooting him, and Mr. Murdock fighting the whole gang without a thing!"

Just then the telephone began ringing. *Bling-bling — bling-bling* — two short rings repeated over and over as if the telephone itself had gone frantic in the fight.

The pounding on the door began again. Mary Sue suddenly startled Jim by screaming, "Help! Help me, Jim—he's coming down again!"

On the stairs old man Murdock had turned about and was coming down with Mary Sue hanging to him, pulling back on his coat. The crashes of the beam at the door continued.

Jim flew up the steps, caught the old distiller with his good arm, and half lifted and half pushed him into the upper story.

A protracted splintering sound told that the front door was being smashed. Murdock seized the trap door and heaved at its weight. He saw men and guns rush in below. Some of the men flung up their weapons, others came storming up the steps. As the shutter teetered over, time seemed drawn out in a horrible elongation. The guns must flash, then men would be upon them — they were upon them — the heavy cover slammed down on heads and arms.

There was an iron hasp and staple on the trap door. Mary Sue snapped it shut.

A medley of shouts and curses burst out from below. Voices shouted to shoot up through the trap door—to set the damned house on fire—to break up everything below —to show 'em, 'y God, what was meant by a warning to leave the county!"

In the midst of the bedlam the telephone began again. *Bling-bling—bling-bling—bling-bling!* Now audible, now lost in the uproar.

Old man Murdock pounded on the floor.

"Some of you fools answer that phone!" he roared, "that's ringing fer me!"

"Come down an' answer it!" shouted a voice.

"Yes, ol' man, whyn't you come down and answer yore phone?" mocked another.

The bell continued ringing with persistence. At last it stopped abruptly and Murdock knew that some one had lifted the receiver. Then he heard an exasperated voice say, "Hush a minute, you fellers. Shut up a minute!"

"What's the matter?"

Greater confusion broke forth and Jim heard the original voice repeating, "Out o' here—got to git out o' here damn quick!"

"Is the sheriff coming?" cried someone.

"Hell no, it's—"

The utmost uproar broke out; a storm of running feet.

"Git! Ketch yore horses. Yave out o' here like a bat out o' hell!"

In the upper story the two Murdocks and the girl stood transfixed, listening to that astounding exodus of the raiders. Through the windows they saw the committee of citizens flying down the water-logged path. They leaped on their horses, spurred them and dashed off at top speed, some up, some down the road.

Old man Murdock tried to level a gun at the flying horsemen but Jim held down the barrel.

"Let 'em go! Nobody's killed so far and let's not do it now. This is the last of them, they'll never come back."

The old man lowered his gun muzzle. "No-o, I won't shoot—but I'm sorry they ain't comin' back. Next time I'd get set, an' I'd lick 'em!" And he wagged his head from side to side.

Mary Sue was undoing the hasp and staple.

"Go find out what the telephone is saying!" she cried.

Jim swung up the trap door and the two flew down the steps. Mary Sue got to the receiver first. She clapped it to her ear.

"Hello! Hello! Hello!" Then a pause and she looked around the wrecked hallway with a shocked expression.

"What's the matter?" cried Jim.

"Oh, Jim! Ringerman is telephoning." She listened a moment longer, her dark eyes widening in her white face. "The levees are broken — the backwater's coming!"

CHAPTER XV.

THE FLOODED COUNTRYSIDE.

THE first visible signs Jim Murdock could see of the break in the levee were the bewildered flight of field birds flushed by the advancing flood. Then rabbits came zigzagging across the old rows of the cotton field, pausing now and then to listen to a kind of faint universal sibilance that grew in the air.

Murdock himself was at the barn. The moment the three persons in the farmhouse had heard the warning over the telephone, old Bill Jack had taken control of the situation. He had sent Jim to the barn to put two young calves up in the loft. He had told Mary Sue to take what she thought best from the lower story to the upper story of the old farmhouse. He himself had hurried off to warn the men at his stills.

When Jim Murdock dropped down from the loft after stowing the calves in the hay, he saw far across the flat fields a chocolate-colored plain rushing in from the river. It leveled corn stalks, foamed through cross fences with a great commotion among the blackberry briers and the sumac bushes.

Once a cow materialized out of a tangle of black weeds and loped bellowing a few yards before the chocolate water swept under her. She suddenly stopped running and stood wide-legged. The water came on like a huge chocolate wedge. It slewed the cow around, flung her down, covered her up. The swiftness of the flood was like the curse of God over the land.

Jim Murdock ran from the barn back to the farmhouse. When he dashed into the door he flung a look backward. The flood already was rushing across the barn lot, bearing on its edge a scum of cobs, sticks, rails, an old pig trough.

Murdock sprang into the door shouting Mary Sue's name. He saw her, white-faced and all eyes, lifting at an old chest of drawers.

"What're you doing?" he called.

"I don't want this low-boy to ruin. Help me get it upstairs.

"I've got to make fast the jo-boat!"

"I did that. I tied it upstairs. Oh, Jim, I wonder if they know it at home."

"Of course, they do. What do you mean, tied the boat upstairs?" He made a dash up, caught the favored low-boy in his arms, and strained up with it. Mary Sue started back down to salvage more furniture.

"Mary Sue, come and show me about that boat!"

She dashed back upstairs and showed him a wire clothes line running out of the second story window. Jim looked out and saw the wire ran down into the yard and was fastened to a staple in the prow of the square, boxlike boat.

"When the water comes up," explained the girl in a rush, "we can pull it to the window and get in."

Murdock's mouth went dry. It was the sort of dubious mechanical plan a woman thinks up in a crisis.

There came a smack and a splashing on the porch. A wild cackling set up under the house and out dashed a hen with chickens. She fluffed up, threatening the water that came swirling under and around the house; then she and her chickens were swept along with chips, boards, a chicken coop, what not.

To see the bare yard abruptly become a seething cauldron was shocking. The boat beneath them flung up its prow, lunged sidewise and almost instantly was overturned in a cross current. The water-logged thing jerked the wire with a singing note. Jim held it with straining fingers. Mary Sue grabbed an end to give it a hitch around the bedpost.

"Don't!" warned Jim sharply. "You'll jerk the staple out of the prow! We've got to play it."

A sheet of cream-colored foam boiled up over the prow of the craft as it slowed up in the racing water. Murdock bent the whimpering wire

over the window sill, fed it out slowly and finally brought the jo-boat to a swaying halt.

WHEN the danger that the boat would break loose was past, Murdock gave the wire a turn around a bedpost and stood watching the water rise higher and higher in the yard. It came in waves, pounding at the doors, the walls, breaking through the lower branches of the pear tree.

Mary Sue repeated over and over: "I wonder what they're doing at home. Mamma'll be scared to death about me."

"We'll try to row over there as soon as this current dies away."

"Will it ever calm down? Isn't this the river current?"

"Oh, no, it's just the backwater running inland. It 'll slack up when it reaches its level."

When it would reach its level, Murdock had no idea. It would rush inland for miles and miles, a vast tumbling sea fed by the watershed of half a continent.

Mary Sue went to the stairs and called to Murdock in a frightened voice: "Jim, it's halfway up the stairs! Do you suppose it will wash the house away?"

The ancient farmhouse seemed to be considering some such debacle. It trembled and creaked under the increasing strain of the current.

"I don't think it will. If it does we have the boat."

The girl stood regarding the water fearfully.

Murdock now had time to change his wet clothes for dry ones. He excused himself from Mary Sue and shut himself up in his bedroom to make the shift. As he got out of his torn, wet clothes the very notion of the fight filled him with disgust. To fight, to brawl here before Mary Sue!

It seemed to Murdock every move he made, every incident that came into his life contrived to lower him in the eyes of Mary Sue. And she was so polite, so courteously unobservant of it!

He had got out of his wet things and found he was bitterly cold and sore all over. He stood rubbing himself gingerly with a towel, still thinking of the girl. On his right arm was a long purple patch where some vein had been ruptured in the fight and the blood had settled under the skin. The discoloration was not sore, but it was very painful higher up on his arm. It must have been, he thought, where the club struck him. His head burned from cuts which his struggle in the muddy water had not soothed.

He shivered into dry clothes despising his background, his class, his being among men who came and beat each other up, clubbed, shot, bit. He recalled faintly that he had bit some man's leg in the fight. The man, he thought with a grimace, probably remembered it more clearly.

When he rejoined Mary Sue he began speaking his mood. He was going to change his surroundings; people judged a man by what happened to him, not by what he did.

Mary Sue quit staring at the world of water outside the window, came across and put a hand on his shoulder. "Don't think about it, Jim."

"Well, it's a fact Mary Sue. Every one will say, 'Oh, he's tough—always fighting and shooting.' And by George, I am tough, to stay in a place where such things occur. You think it yourself."

The girl looked at him with her face

dimpling into the faint beginning of a smile.

"I won't be so hard on you. I've been in 'em myself, Jim."

Murdock took down her hand and held it, rather hurt.

"Don't joke. When I stand here, all bunged up, and know that the very thing that bruised me up makes it absolutely impossible that you'll ever come to me and be with me all the time—well, it's nothing to smile about."

"I JUST meant to get you to laugh a little. You're such an awfully serious boy, Jim—but I suppose if I had gone through college the way you did—" She stood looking at him with humid eyes and then said thoughtfully: "After all, I *was* in it myself."

"Oh, Mary Sue, you know your being here was—what difference will your being here make?"

"Good gracious, do you imagine this won't cause all sorts of talk about me!" exclaimed the girl.

"Why, you? Winchell Meredith's daughter!"

"Oh, but you are innocent! Why, what more do they want? That will be the very reason, of course. Why, wouldn't I talk my head off if one of my girl friends should fire a shotgun to scare away a mob who had come to kill her gentleman friend." She began laughing again. "It's positively funny."

"My Lord," ejaculated Murdock, "if I've got you into trouble—"

"That's all right. I know what I'll do. I'll beat 'em to it. The first bunch of girls I meet I'm going to tell 'em all about it. And believe me, Jim, I'll have something to tell. Listen, do you know why conventional people look down so on fights and think they are vulgar? Because they've never been in one. My goodness, there's more dash and go in one little fight than there is in a dozen baseball games! There's positively no comparison!"

Mr. Jim Murdock did not quite know whether Mary Sue was serious or not; but that she should find anything in the brawl to commend even playfully picked up his spirits. As he thought it over he even saw a possible advantage for himself in it. He went over to the window and looked out at the jo-boat.

"Look here, Mary Sue, you really got a kick out of that fight?" he queried skeptically.

"Sure I did. Why, Jim, you can't hire men to stage a fight like that!"

"All right, now wait, just wait a minute. Is there so terribly much difference between aristocrats and—just ordinary folks? If you can dip down into my sort of world and—er—really enjoy it—and at the same time, Mary Sue, if I'm trying my very best to—to pull out of it—to get up where your sort lives— You see what I mean, don't you?"

The girl looked at him with another smile forming in her eyes.

"You mean, why won't I marry you?"

"Yes, sure, that's what I mean."

"Well, Jim, I'm afraid fights might get to be a habit with me. I might lose my point of view."

"Really, really, don't laugh," begged Jim, quite annoyed. "If there is such a slight difference between aristocrats and ordinary folks as that, why insist on it?"

"I don't say the difference isn't slight," agreed Mary Sue, composing her face, "but I do say it takes three or four generations to get it."

Jim drew the jo-boat to the window. Mary Sue was hopelessly frivolous, even about the most intimate and serious things. He began bailing the water out of the boat by giving it sharp jerks. A wave ran from the front of the craft to the stern and a little water splashed overboard.

Later he tipped the vessel from side to side and at every tip bucketsful leaped over the garboard. It was a riverman's trick of bailing small boats. When the water in the vessel was sufficiently low, Murdock lowered himself into it and finished the job with a bucket.

The two then outfitted the jo-boat for a voyage. They took raincoats, overshoes, some ham and bread, which Mary Sue salvaged from the kitchen. They lowered this into the little ark, climbed down themselves. Jim established Mary Sue on a pillow on the stern seat. She had come through the fight as crisp and pressed as when she first drove from her home in the Meredith motor, and that seemed ages ago. Jim unwired the oars from under the seats and loosed the clothesline from the staple.

As the two rowed away, the old farmhouse with its upper story, sharp roof and chimney, looked strange in the endless plain of water. The barn across the inundated road was almost covered. Jim thought of the calves he had put in the loft.

Mary Sue was uneasy about her mother, and Murdock laid his course toward the Meredith home. He knew his father would take care of himself.

THE current of the backwater set westward, away from the river. It was amazing how the world of water destroyed all sense of direction. Only the tops of trees, an occasional telephone pole, and the roofs of shacks lifted above the flood; Murdock was never sure what tree or what shack stood before him. He pulled on and on, making a haphazard allowance for the current.

Here and there floated a pig or a horse or a rabbit, not close together, but at long intervals as if the backwater were casual in its erasure of life.

Once across the sky moved an army of spring blackbirds, thousands of them. For half an hour they filled the ochre sea with their metallic creaking. Their van disappeared over the horizon before their rearguard came into view. Among the tree tops an occasional squirrel stared with quick black eyes at this unexampled world of water. Once Murdock saw a drove of ducks. They were tame ducks and kept up an interrogative quacking for the home they had lost.

Murdock had the greatest difficulty with his landmarks. When he decided he knew one tree, he could not bring its neighbors into recognition. Now and then he would be sure of his position over the drowned terrain, then it would disorganize itself into strangeness again.

Once the rowers saw a small game rooster perched on a pole which bore a child's windmill. The fowl balanced itself precariously on the vane of the little mill and watched the whirring wheel with a round eye.

As Murdock tried to remember who in the neighborhood owned gamecocks, he heard the murmur of human voices over the water. He turned the jo-boat in the general direction of the sound, skirting the tops of a grove of trees. The sound he heard developed into the melancholy keening of a negro woman's voice.

"Oh, Lawd," wailed the woman,

"hab mercy on us! Please, Lawd, sen' somebody aftah us heah on dis house. Oh, Lawd, you laid yo han' on de Missippy. Its wattahs rose up and heah we is, Lawd, lef' on dis house. Sen' somebody! Sen' somebody to he'p us!"

Her voice went on and on, lifting and wailing in her prayer.

On the corner of an upturned shack perched a negro man and a negro girl. The current had evidently flung the shack on its side when it first rushed in, then had floated the house up among the trees.

When the black girl saw the boat she broke into a shouting.

"Blessed Redeemer! Lawd Jesus, I thanks you! Bless be yo' holy name!"

As Murdock drew closer he suddenly recognized the yellow man as Pontus Pilt. Jim was instantly alarmed. "Pontus," he cried. "what are you doing here? Where's pap?"

The marooned man peered into a hole which he had torn in the clapboards of the roof.

"I guess yo' pappy's in Ringehman by dis time, Mist' Jim," he said in a stunned voice.

"How came you not to go with him?"

"I run back heah to warn Hetty to git over to the big house."

"Is this your and Hetty's shack?"

"Used to be, Mist' Jim. I got heah an' foun' Sairey visitin' wid Hetty. I say, 'Run fo' de big house, you niggahs, fas' as you kin go!' But befo' mammy gits sta'ted, de wattah was comin' thru de fields. Little later, hit was comin' in de do'. I say, 'Hetty, you got to climb up in de rafters now.' She say, 'Dis is a jedgment sont on me fuh 'zertin' Mistuh Bill Jack in his hour.' I say, 'Fuh God's sake, le' me an' Sairey he'p you up among de rafters 'cause dis wattah is a comin' up fas'.' An' me and Sairey pushed her up, an' she kep' sayin', 'Dis is a jedgment fuh 'zertin' Mist' Bill Jack in his hour.'"

IN the midst of this recital Mary Sue suddenly cried out: "You don't mean Aunt Hetty is down there in the rafters of this shack?"

Sairey suddenly burst out wailing: "Oh, Miss Mary Sue, God lay He han' on Aunt Hetty! He lay He han' in a flood on Aunt Hetty! He took her up on High. Yea, He took her up, Miss Mary Sue. Fuh Aunt Hetty was a good woman. She was a good Christian woman."

Tears streamed down Sairey's black face. Pontus, astride the angle of the roof, pulled off clapboards to enlarge the hole to peer down for the drowned woman or grope down and touch her clothes.

Jim Murdock looked sadly up at the negroes. "Come on down, Pontus, you and Sairey."

"I got to git Hetty out, Mist' Jim."

"What would you do with her, Pontus? There's no ground to bury her in. You couldn't keep her in a house until this water goes down."

A scrap of something the colored people believed floated through Mary Sue's mind.

"Come on, Pontus, you know the Bible says, 'Let the dead bury their dead.'"

"Yes'm, hit sho' says that," put in Sairey.

Pontus gave up working at the hole and lowered himself into the jo-boat. He took Jim's place at the oars automatically.

"We want to get to the Meredith place, Pontus," directed the white man. "Do you know the way?"

"I knows de way, but I don't reckon they's nobody there."

"Why not?"

"I guess they must 'a' got a telephone and gone to Ringehman."

"We must go there," sobbed Mary Sue. "Mother might be there. She'll think I'm drowned."

"Yes'm," agreed Pontus, "but I guess she's in Ringehman."

"We'll have to go see," said Mary Sue, wiping her tears with a wisp of a handkerchief. The thought of Aunt Hetty being caught in the rafters of the overturned shack tore the girl's heart.

"Yes'm," nodded the yellow man somberly. He leaned against the oars. The craft moved off against the flood with a soft hissing under its square prow.

The tragic, irrational outcome of old Aunt Hetty's flight from the mob stunned Murdock. If Pontus had not persuaded his mother to leave the farmhouse, if the neighbors had not become wrought up over Ed Purvis's being seen on the Murdock place, if Ned Nevis and Errett Meredith had not teased Mary Sue, the old negro woman would have been alive.

The utter lack of any moral coherence to this sequence was what shocked Jim Murdock. That has always been the deeply shocking phase of life to human beings. Its fortuities after all do not depend upon the worth or goodness or humility of man, but upon sheer chance. So the fundamental note of all religions becomes: "The ways of Providence are inscrutable."

As the jo-boat passed shacks and houses and barns on the way to the Meredith place, the thought of Aunt Hetty filled them all with dead people, for Jim. A certain warrant of this was offered by a floating cow or pig.

Some faint conception of the enormousness of the disaster came to Murdock; not only his plantation and the next, but county after county, State after State lay under the backwater.

THE jo-boat skimmed on and on, skirting woodlands, following open water representing fields. After a long time Murdock saw a handsome old brick upper story with dormer windows and chimneys lifting itself, not without dignity and grace, above the umber sea.

The white man and the white woman looked at the manor with curious eyes.

"What place is that, Pontus?" asked Mary Sue.

"Why, Miss Mary Sue, dat's yo' home!" Pontus's voice was hushed with the tragedy of his mother's death.

Jim stared at the mansion and suddenly the dormer windows and chimneys and surrounding trees seemed to stand motionless and yet at the same time swing softly and silently into a familiar position. The whole landscape shared this momentary movement of orientation. Suddenly Jim knew where his own home was, where Ringerman was; he knew the route Pontus had taken to row from Aunt Hetty's shack to the Meredith manor. But the odds were ten to one he couldn't find his way to any of these places. Jim said nothing about this. He was ashamed of his poor sense of direction. His father, he thought, would never have got lost.

As soon as Mary Sue had been told she was approaching her own home she cried out: "They haven't gone yet. Yonder's smoke coming out of the chimney."

The boat pushed on up to the house and finally landed at a little upstairs

balcony. The two whites left the negroes in the boat, climbed over a little balustrade and entered a door. Sure enough they heard voices, and both youth and girl ran through the upper hall, following the sounds to a door. Mary Sue burst inside, calling: Mamma! Mamma!"

Jim Murdock lingered in the hallway through some remembrance of Mrs. Meredith's promise to insult him if he ever entered her house. The next moment he heard Mary Sue cry out in disappointment, "Why, Poindexter, where are the folks?"

Murdock entered and heard Poindexter answer, "Dey all gone to Ringehman, Miss Mary Sue. Come a telephone message saying, 'Come to Ringehman, dey gwine to cut de lebee.'"

"Going to cut the levee!" cried the girl.

"Yaas'm. Dey say dey had to cut de lebee to save Ringehman."

Jim Murdock stood staring at the negro and thinking over and over, "Cut the levee to save Ringerman—cut the levee! Why, damn Ringerman! What in the hell!"

He visualized the devastation—plantation after plantation, homes, stables, gins, all to save Ringerman. And a countryman's detestation for a town rose up within him.

"Why didn't you go with them?" asked Mary Sue.

"Mist' Winchell tol' me to stay here and take ker o' de house," said Poindexter.

"Who were you talking to when we came in?" inquired the girl curiously.

"Why, I was jes' talkin' to muhse'f, Miss Mary Sue," stammered Poindexter.

"It didn't sound as if you were talking to yourself."

"Y-Yas'm, I guess I was. I sets heah an' looks in de fiah an' sings an' plays de French harp and pats muh foot an' talks to muhse'f."

Mary Sue considered Poindexter skeptically, then walked across the room and passed through an inner door. Jim stood looking at Poindexter, remembering the conversation he had heard from the hall.

"She thinks there is some one in this house," he said to Poindexter.

"Yas, suh, she do." Then, after a moment, he added, "You know us niggahs gits so used to bein' called a liar by de way white folks acts, it comes to us jest as nachel as a ole shoe."

"Is there any one in the house?" asked Jim, regretting that Mary Sue had shouted from the hall.

"No, suh, dey isn't, Mist' Jim. Whut 'd I kerr if they was?"

Then Jim remembered the double form he had seen rise up over the dike of the slough, and how he had struck Poindexter in the ear, when the negro was carrying Purvis.

After a moment he said, "Aunt Hetty's dead."

"How come?" ejaculated Poindexter in distress.

Jim was still telling Poindexter the details when Mary Sue returned.

"Well," she said in the voice of a person who had searched and found nothing, "I am going to change my dress and pack some clothes if I have to stay in town. My goodness, the clothes it takes for a visit!"

A SUDDEN hallooing outside the house took all the inmates to the windows. They saw Pontus Pilt and Sairey waving and shouting. Then they saw a motor boat coming across the backwater. It was a big

launch and crowded to the guards. It chortled up to the manor and threw a line around a column of the porch. It was one of the boats sent out from Ringerman to search the countryside and bring in anybody who had been marooned by the flood.

Mary Sue hurried with her packing. Sairey went in to help her. In a half hour or less Mary Sue came out with two suitcases and a hat box for her stay in Ringerman. The floods might come, devastate her plantation, and drive her out of her home; but Mary Sue would go in style.

The captain of the motor boat ordered some negroes out of the cabin to give seats to " Jim 'n' Mary Sue."

Just before the motor boat backed away, Jim suggested to the captain that they would better take Poindexter. The captain swore violently that they certainly would take Poindexter; they needed negroes to help hold the levee around Ringerman. In fact, one of the major reasons for the launch's trip was to collect all possible labor for the Ringerman levees.

Two or three white men climbed on the porch again and went into the manor, calling Poindexter. They called and called, but no Poindexter answered. The boatmen then threatened Poindexter, shouting what they would do to him if he didn't get into the launch at once. At last the captain and the pilot climbed into the porch to help search for Poindexter, when one of the negroes remembered that he had seen Poindexter paddle off in the jo-boat.

Sure enough, the jo-boat was gone. It had been taken from under the noses of the boat crew in such a casual way no one had paid any attention to it. The negro remembered Poindexter asking if the jo-boat was all right where it was, and some one had said it was all right. Then Poindexter had said he would move it where it would not get smashed, and he had paddled it around the house, ostensibly to moor it on the other side, but in reality he must have rowed away into the woods.

There was much speculation on board the launch why Poindexter had done such a thing, that is, if the negro witnesses were telling the truth and Poindexter had done so. If he had not, where was the jo-boat? If he had, where was Poindexter?

The captain said Poindexter was just another dawg-lazy nigger who would rather see every soul, white or black, in Ringerman drown than do a lick of work himself.

Jim and Mary Sue sat in the boat's cabin with their feet stuck out to a stove which was so small and red-hot that it resembled a lightning bug.

" If dad told Poindexter to stay at home and look out for the house," said Mary Sue, nestling against Jim Murdock's arm, " they'll have to shoot him to get him away from the place."

They talked on of this and that, of Aunt Hetty's death, of the game rooster on the windmill, of where Mary Sue's father and mother would stay in Ringerman. The Meredith s knew everybody of consequence in the town.

As the motor stood away from the manor, Murdock looked back at the house through a glazed square in the back of the cabin. And he thought he saw the curtain of a dormer window move slightly as if some one inside were watching the departure of the launch. He did not give it any great amount of thought. He was occupied mainly in enjoying the pressure of Mary Sue's shoulder against his arm.

TO BE CONCLUDED NEXT WEEK.

The Men Who Make The Argosy

GEORGE WASHINGTON OGDEN

Author of "Tophet at Trail's End," "A Man from the Bad Lands," etc.

THE beginning was on a rugged little farm in the hills of eastern Kansas, where old John Brown's bootheels lately had left their scratches on the flat limestone which was the best crop that land ever grew. My early labors were devoted to the thankless task of planting and plowing corn for a set of unappreciative domestic animals, the one and only aim of such endeavors, as I then saw it, as it still appears to me, being to provide maintenance for these voracious creatures during the winter.

At the age of seventeen the fatuity of this endless round set my feet in motion away from the bondage to certain pot-bellied horses and moss-horned cows. I landed in a job of railroading, which was *railroading*, not riding the tops of freight cars with a metal brand on my hat. It was the middle of July; the temperature was somewhere around one hundred and five in the shade; the job breaking up large rocks into nice comfortable sizes for the jerries to load on flat cars. All the nine-pound sledges had been appropriated by those of the gang on the job ahead of me, so the boss, who swung a seventeen-pound hammer, did me the great favor to allow me to share his honors with him. I was seventeen years and a few months of age; my weight one hundred and thirty pounds.

But the boss was a good-natured man who wore a lindsey shirt, red with black checks, the big baggy sleeves of it gathered at the wristbands and never rolled up. Now and then he would permit me to vary my interesting and innocent diversion with the big hammer by carrying out the broken stones and cording them up along the track. It took a man to stand up to that hammer in such weather, and the old-timers looked to see the green farmer lad go down. But it did not happen so.

Three years of this gay and festive life found this bright young Alger hero section boss, lord of seven miles of single track on the main line of the Santa Fe railroad. Such honor was not for a minor; after three or four months of this dignity the resident engineer learned that I must live about five months before reaching voting age. So I was lowered to the rank of straw-boss—which was too much for my proud spirit. I jumped the job, to land presently as a reporter on the Kansas City *Star*.

There followed, roughly estimated, fifteen years of newspaper work, jumping from coast to coast, with stops now and then in the middle, with a try at magazine stories, more or less successfully from the start. So the long way to literature led on.

My first book was "Tennessee Todd," a story of steamboating, my second "Home Place." My first serial was written for Bob Davis, and published in one of the Munsey magazines. Perhaps the most notable serial was "The Duke of Chimney Butte," which ran in the *Cavalier*. Fred Stone made a picture of this story. The book had a gratifying success here, and went over big in England, where it still sells well. Several of the stories which ran serially in the Munsey publications have been made into pictures, notably "The Bondroy," with Richard Barthelmess; "Claim Number One," with whom I do not now recall, and two or three with Buck Jones, Hoot Gibson and other notable screen Westerners starring.

There are twenty-four titles (book) to my more or less credit now, quite a number of them first appearing as serials in one or another of the Munsey publications.

And no doubt many who read this will say that a good railroader was ruined when that fellow took to writing books.

Argonotes.

The Readers' Viewpoint

HEADLINERS COMING

LOOKING ahead a way we see some mighty fine tales on the way to you. To list just a few:

H. Bedford-Jones comes back with a great *John Solomon* serial in the February 15 issue.

Ralph Milne Farley will be on hand again with a sequel to "The Radio Flyers" on February 22.

Charles Alden Seltzer brings us a great Northern serial a few weeks later.

W. Wirt follows with another *John Norcross* tale—wild adventure and fighting in interior China.

And a host of others.

Where is **A. Merritt?** Coming! He has now fully recovered from his recent illness and promises the sequel to "The Face in the Abyss" most any day.

THANK YOU!

AMONG the many holiday cards we received was the following well expressed and much appreciated sentiment:

> Tho' readers are a fickle crew,
> Philandering and flirty,
> Here's one who will be true to you
> In nineteen hundred thirty!
>
> *R. Jere Black, Jr.*

A NEWCOMER

BERTON E. COOK makes his first appearance in ARGOSY this week with "First In." Of himself he tells us:

I am the product of sea-going families on both sides. I myself have known the forecastles of eight different ships, four of which were coal steamers. To me, a tough old freighter is almost a sort of shrine—until I attempt to eat in her sailors' mess!

In 1914 I was graduated from Syracuse University—from the State College of Forestry—and went out into the White Mountains on a timber cruise immediately as a mere compass man. I was one of that four who actually put a ten per cent cruise on the timber between the Base Station and the top of Mt. Washington up in New Hampshire. We shed shirts, snowshoes and pants on that job! Then we sent to another one.

Then I got into the teaching game, and there I am. Occasionally I take a trip to sea—expect to do so next summer if all goes well.

WHO IS "N. N."?

WILLIAM MERRIAM ROUSE wants to discover the identity of one of his admirers. He writes:

I have a letter from a reader of ARGOSY who is kind enough to praise my story, "Glory of Bildad." I should like to reply to the letter, but, unfortunately, the writer did not give a sufficient address.

Would it be possible to insert something under "Argonotes" to ask whether "N. N." of Chula Vista, California, cares to give a name and street number?

What "N. N." had to say gave me an idea for another story.

WILLIAM MERRIAM ROUSE.

A BATCH of sequels this reader would like:

San Francisco, Cal.

"The Planet of Peril" is the cause of this letter, being the best story I have read since the ARGOSY and *All-Story* were combined. My thanks to Mr. Kline, and congratulations to the magazine for such a story. Let's have some more of the same, also a few like "He Rules Who Can," "Bluffer's Luck," "Captain Nemesis," "The Hawk of Hazard," "Man-hunt," "The Mental Marvel," "The Phantom in the

Rainbow," "Radio Flyers," "The Raider," "War Above the Timber Line," "WH Brand," etc.

We ought to have a sequel to "Almost a Gentleman," "Man-Hunt" and "Swords Are Out." Also to Mr. Mason's "The Word of Adjutant Kent."

I am a Western story fan, having all of Mr. Seltzer's novels, but a few like the above now and then go good. By the way, if Ray Cummings and some of the other authors would leave the "I" out of their stories, it would be appreciated.

Well, good luck and success to the new *All-Story* and *Railroad Man's Magazine*, with long life to the ARGOSY.

WM. M. ST.CLAIR.

VARIETY is the keynote of ARGOSY, and it certainly strikes a responsive chord in our readers. One writes:

Ridgeway, Mo.

As I glance through the "Argonotes" I notice that one reader doesn't want any more of this and another doesn't want any more of that. How can any one get recreation from reading fiction without variety? Who would want to sit down and read an endless succession of any one type of story?

Variety is what sells the ARGOSY, and without variety it wouldn't be ARGOSY. My guess is that about ninety-five per cent of your readers read every story, or at least all of the continued ones, in the magazine.

Your writers take us, in imagination, to every corner of the earth. We jump from Chicago to Africa and back again all in the same issue. Who could ask more for a dime?

If you would omit the names of the authors from the contents page, with the exception of *Mme. Storey*, ninety-nine per cent of the readers couldn't tell who wrote the stories.

If a man or woman doesn't like railroad stories he or she should read them anyway and learn something about railroads. The same can be said of nearly all the other types of story.

P. R. WEESE.

A RESIDENT of Detroit compliments Kingsbury Scott on his excellent local color:

Detroit, Mich.

I just began reading ARGOSY with the September 28 issue, and I want to tell you what I think of it.

The story, "Salt Water Foolishness," is correct in that the steam barges were exactly as Kingsbury Scott describes them. It was a picturesque sight to see them coming down the lakes with their "tows," schooners with the top-masts taken off, and they towed from one to six in number, all laden to the plank-sheer with lumber, shingles or lath. There are a few left on the lakes to-day. Most of them are in the sand and gravel trade. "The House in Kaiserallee" is the best novelette I ever read in any magazine, bar none. "What Kept You?" and "Hey, Rube!" were a close second. If you continue to publish novels like "War Above the Timber Line," "The Hawk of Hazard," "Almost a Gentleman," and "The Treasure on Skeleton Key," I'm signed up for life. You can't publish too many Western, railroad or sea stories for me.

"The Princess of the Atom" was a disgrace to an otherwise perfect magazine. "A Pile of Lumber," "The Piker's Game," "Red Decks," "The Punch Puller" and "Box Car Seer" were splendid.

I am glad to hear that you are going to publish some of H. Bedford-Jones's work. From what I read of him in other magazines, I know he will be welcome to ARGOSY.

ELMER KREMKOW.

THIS ARGOSY fan finds that Fred MacIsaac leads the pack on wordage for the year:

Davenport, Iowa.

Each Wednesday, when I get my ARGOSY, I get out a little notebook and mark down the number of pages in each story under each author. I find it very interesting. At present Fred MacIsaac has over four hundred pages. W. Wirt and Ray Cummings are running neck and neck, Wirt with two hundred and forty-three and Cummings with two hundred and thirty-five.

I like Theodore Roscoe and John A. Thompson best for short stories.

GENE LITTIG.

NOW an old-timer has a few words:

Chicago, Ill.

We don't think we can get along without the ARGOSY in our house. It may be because we have had it so long, but I think the real reason is because it's the best magazine on the market.

For over forty years I have been taking the ARGOSY. I bought it first from the newsstands when it had a bright yellow cover. Its headline writers were Oliver Optic, Horatio Alger, Jr., John Oxenhinn and Wm. McArry Graydon. In the many years that have passed a few great stories stand out in my memory: "Singing Sands," and "The Black Wolf of Picardy" are two of them.

The David Fox series of detective stories I remember with pleasure, too. I want to thank the ARGOSY for giving us so many historical stories this year. The ones located in Rome, Holland and Constantinople I greatly enjoyed.

Historical stories are my favorite kind. Also I want to praise the ARGOSY for introducing so many brilliant writers to its pages—especially such names as J. Allan Dunn, W. C. Tuttle, J. E. Grinstead, Eugene Cunningham and Talbot Mundy. Glad to read another Western tale by Kenneth Perkins—Kline's tale of perils in Venus was good.

An octogenarian reader.

R. M. B.

NOTHING but appreciation here:

Los Angeles, Cal.

I am one of the many thousands of readers that are prompted, possibly by a guilty conscience, to do a little praising myself in behalf of a magazine that has given me such thrilling mental pictures painted in words by the old favorites: MacIsaac, Perkins, Cummings, Wirt, Worts and Mason. I have nothing to offer but praise for your magazine, and Mason's latest story, "Death's Domain," is my idea of interpretation of the expression "meat on the table."

JAMES W. BUDDELL.

YOUR CHOICE COUPON

Editor, ARGOSY,
280 Broadway, N. Y. C., N. Y.

The stories I like best in this issue of the magazine are as follows:

1.....

2.....

3.....

4.....

5.....

I did not like.....

because.....

Name.....

Street.....

City.....*State*.....

2-1

Looking Ahead!

Peter the Brazen Returns!

in

THE SAPPHIRE SMILE

By LORING BRENT

Defying the death threat which banished him from China, Peter the Brazen, one of the most popular ARGOSY characters, makes his return to our pages—and to China, the scene of his daring and stormy exploits—next week in a complete novelette full of action and adventure.

Strange and Unusual—is the curious case of

The Man Who Was Two Men

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RAY CUMMINGS

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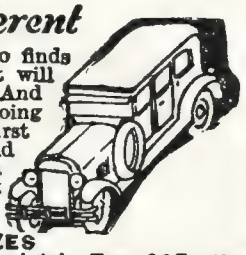
1ST PRIZE

Find the Dollar Sign that is different

Because it will mean money to you. Every person who finds the different Dollar Sign ($) and takes an active part will absolutely receive a handsome reward. You can't lose. And besides, some one who mails in this announcement is going to receive a LATEST MODEL HUDSON COACH, first prize. One of the Dollar Signs is different. Mark it and send this ad to me at once. If your eyes are sharp you may be the first to solve the puzzle correctly. Look closely—examine each $—they are all alike but one. Rush your answer with your name and address.



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Win the Hudson and I will give you $675.00 Cash Extra if you're prompt. Every prize guaranteed and will be paid promptly. Think what it means if you win!

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Address..... Town.....

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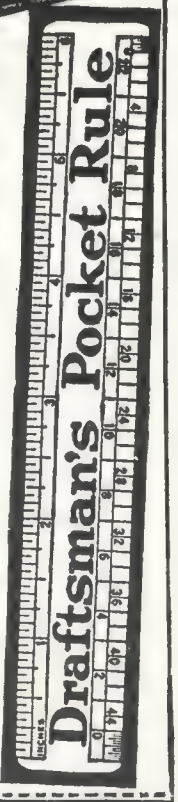
Copy this Jack and Get this Draftsman's Rule FREE

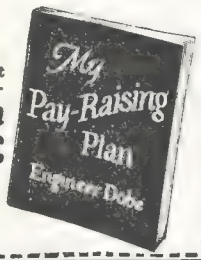


Automobiles—Electricity—Motor Busses—Aviation—Building Construction.
There are jobs for Draftsmen in all of these industries and in hundreds of others.
Aviation is expanding to enormous proportions.
Electricity is getting bigger every day.
Motor Bus Building is becoming a leading world industry.
Building of stores, homes, factories and office buildings is going on all the time.
No structure can be erected without plans drawn by a draftsman. No machinery can be built without plans drawn by a draftsman.
I train you at home, in Drafting. Keep the job you have now while learning drafting.
I will train you in drafting right where you are in your spare time. I have trained men who are making from $3,500 to $9,000 a year. There is a big future for draftsmen because you plan and supervise the work of others, or you go into business for yourself. Get started now toward a better position, paying a good, straight salary, the year around. Comfortable surroundings. Inside work.

Employment Service After training you I help you to get a job without charging you a cent for this service. Employers of Draftsmen come to me for men because they know that Dobe Trained Men make good as they have learned drafting by actually doing the work themselves, in a practical way. Employers know they are not taking chances on men trained by me.

Money-Back Agreement
I train you at home under a positive Money-Back Agreement. If my training does not satisfy you after you have finished, you get every penny back.

Age or Lack of Education No Drawback
Previous experience is not necessary. You do not need to be a college man or high school graduate.



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A COLD

As soon as you realize you've taken cold—take some tablets of Bayer Aspirin. Almost before your head can stuff-up, you feel your cold is conquered. Those aches and pains you felt coming on will soon subside. Relief is almost instantaneous! Even if your cold has gained headway, and your temples throb and your very bones ache, these tablets will bring prompt relief. It is better, of course, to take Bayer Aspirin at the very first sneeze or cough—it will head-off the cold and spare you much discomfort. Get the genuine, with proven directions for colds and headaches; neuralgia, neuritis, sore throat, and many important uses.

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I AM going to give away, ABSOLUTELY FREE, more than $5,000.00 worth of wonderful prizes, consisting of an 8-cyl. Studebaker Sedan, a Chevrolet Sedan, two Phonographs, a Shetland Pony, a Radio, Gold Watches and many other valuable prizes—besides Hundreds of Dollars in Cash to people who solve our puzzle and win our prizes. Already we have given away more than $160,000.00 in cash and prizes to advertise our business. Miss Jewell Casey won $3,720.00, Mr. I. Nystrom won $3,375.00, Miss Anna Linke won $2,320, Mr. M. D. Reidman won $3,920.00, Mrs. Robt. Ellington won $1,750.00 and Mr. E. N. Garrett won $2,320.00. More than $5,000.00 in prizes will be awarded in this offer, which is guaranteed by an old reliable company with a reputation of many years of honest dealings and is open to anyone living in the United States outside of Chicago.

Solve This Puzzle

There are many objects in the picture of the barnyard above, such as dog, girl, fence, automobile, rooster, boy, tent, etc. If you can find 5 starting with the letter "C," write them on a piece of paper together with your name and address and send it to me at once.

$550.00 Given for Promptness

In addition to the Studebaker Sedan, the Chevrolet Sedan and the many other valuable prizes—besides Hundreds of Dollars in Cash—I am also going to give an extra added Cash Prize of $550.00 for Promptness, to the winner of the Studebaker Sedan, making a total of $2,800.00 you can win. In case of ties duplicate prizes will be awarded, and any winner may have cash instead of the prize won if so preferred. Get busy right away. Find 5 objects starting with the letter "C," write them on a piece of paper together with your name and address and send it to me just as soon as possible to qualify for an opportunity to share in the $5,000.00 total grand prizes. EVERYBODY PROFITS. Who knows but that you may be the Lucky First Prize Winner. It pays to act promptly.

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Sparks cannot fly.
Cigarette tastes sweeter.
A cooler smoke.
Makes cigarette smoking safe.
Fine for the automobile driver.
Retails at only $1.00.

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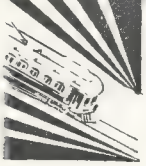

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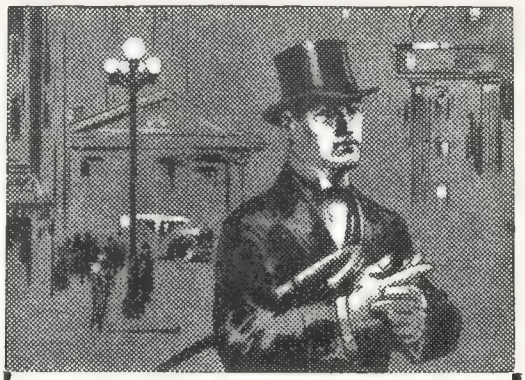

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And the best part of it all is this. It may open your eyes to the great future for YOU as a highly paid Finger Print Expert. More men are needed right now. This school has taken men just like you and trained them for high official positions. This is the kind of work you would like. Days full of excitement. Big salaries. Rewards.

Can you meet this test?

Can you read and write? Are you ambitious? Would you give 30 minutes a day of your spare time preparing yourself for this profession? Would you like a life of excitement, thrilling adventures and high pay? Answer "yes" and I'll show you how to attain all this.

Send the coupon and I'll send the Free Reports—also a wonderful illustrated book telling of the future awaiting you as a Finger Print Expert.

T. G. COOKE, Pres.
INSTITUTE OF APPLIED SCIENCE
1920 Sunnyside Ave., Dept. 11-42 Chicago, Ill.

Institute of Applied Science
1920 Sunnyside Ave. Dept. 11-42. Chicago, Ill.

Gentlemen:—Without any obligation whatever, send me the Reports of Operator No. 38, also your illustrated Free Book on Finger Prints and your low prices and Easy Terms Offer.

Name .....

Address .....

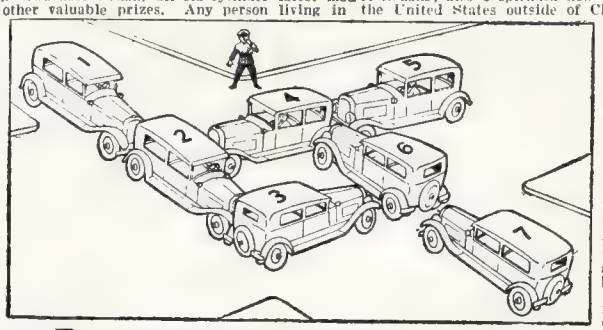
Age .....

Win Nash and $500 or $1,845 Cash

Seven Brand New 6-Cylinder Cars Given

For advertising purposes I am going to give absolutely free a brand new six-cylinder "Special Six" Nash four-door Sedan, an Oldsmobile two-door Sedan, a De Soto two-door Sedan, a Pontiac two-door Sedan, an Essex two-door Sedan, a Whippet two-door Sedan, and a Chevrolet two-door Sedan, all six-cylinder latest model Sedans; also 4 splendid new console type radios, a Victor Orthophonic Victrola and other valuable prizes. Any person living in the United States outside of Chicago may enter an answer to this puzzle except employees of the W. D. Boyce Company or members of their families, or winners of automobiles or first prizes in any of our previous offers, or members of their families.

Solve This Traffic Puzzle



In the picture there are 7 cars in a bad traffic jam. None of them can move forward, for each car is blocked by the one in front of it. One of these cars will have to be backed out. Which one? The traffic policeman seems to be stumped. Can you straighten up this tangle for him? Only one car may be moved backward, and if you pick out the right one, you will see that it is not necessary to back up any of the others. Send the number of the car which when backed out will relieve this traffic tie-up, and if your answer is correct you will be qualified for this opportunity.

$500.00 for Promptness We are not only giving the Sedans, radios and so forth in our big prize list amounting to over $6,800.00, but are also giving an additional $500.00 in cash for promptness to the winner of first prize if he or she has been prompt. Thus, the first prize winner will receive the Nash Sedan and $500.00 in cash, or $1,845.00. Find the car which when backed out will relieve this traffic tangle and send the number of it in a letter or on a post card, or you can mark the car on the picture and send it to me. **Be sure to write or print your** name and address plainly. All who answer correctly can share in the prizes or cash. Duplicate prizes paid in case of ties. ANSWER TODAY. **G. W. ALDERTON, Dept. 373, 510 N. Dearborn St., Chicago, Ill.**

AGENTS! Sell Shirts Make Big Money Without Investment

Many salesmen making Big Profits each week selling Bostonian nationally known high-grade broadcloth shirts. 3 for $6.95

Wonderful Selling Outfit FREE

POSTAGE PAID. $1.50 cash commission for you. $9.00 value. Quick sales. Write today for free sample outfit.

Bostonian

BOSTONIAN MFG. CO., Dept. B-255, 89 Bickford St., Boston, Mass

Relief from the curse of constipation

A Battle Creek physician says, "Constipation is responsible for more misery than any other cause." But immediate relief has been found. A tablet called Rexall Orderlies has been discovered. This tablet attracts water from the system into the lazy, dry, evacuating bowel called the colon. The water loosens the dry food waste and causes a gentle, thorough natural movement without forming a habit or ever increasing the dose. Stop suffering from constipation. Chew a Rexall Orderlie at night. Next day bright. Get 24 for 25c today. Sold only at Rexall Stores. Liggett's are also Rexall Stores. There is one near you.

SAVE WITH SAFETY AT YOUR Rexall DRUG STORE

THE WORLD'S LARGEST CHAIN OF INDIVIDUALLY OWNED DRUG STORES

NEW INDUSTRY NEEDS MEN

ELECTRIC REFRIGERATION needs you for sales, service, installation and production jobs. Trained men earn up to $60 and $100 a week and more. Fast-growing field backed by General Motors, General Electric, etc. New, easy home training qualifies you quickly without textbooks. Praised by General Electric, Servel, Kelvinator, Copeland, Zerozone and other manufacturers. Low price—easy terms. Free employment service.

Valuable Book FREE

Contains big money facts—full details. Sent free—without obligation. **UTILITIES ENGINEERING INSTITUTE, Dept. 1020, 4403 Sheridan Road, Chicago, Ill.**

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TRADE MARK

THE OLD RELIABLE

DON'T DIE IN THE HOUSE

Sold at all Drug Stores — Refuse Substitutes

Used the world over for generations

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NO JOKE TO BE DEAF

—EVERY DEAF PERSON KNOWS THAT

I make myself hear, after being deaf for 25 years, with these Artificial Ear Drums. I wear them day and night. They stop head noises and ringing ears. They are perfectly comfortable. No one sees them. Write me and I will tell you a true story, how I got deaf and how I make you hear. Address

Medicated Ear Drum

GEO. P. WAY, Artificial Ear Drum Co. (Inc.)
39 Hoffman Bldg. — Detroit, Mich.

Send 10 Cents

and receive a copy of the ARGOSY, an All-Fiction Magazine that gives you many hours of entertainment.

MUNSEY COMBINATION, — **280 Broadway, N. Y.**

MONEY! *When You Want it—*

Sell SUPERWEAR

MEN'S HOSIERY *and* UNDERWEAR

AGENTS WANTED EVERYWHERE!

No longer need you find yourself hard up for money. We offer you a chance to earn from $50.00 to $150.00 every week with our big Direct-to-Consumer line of Men's Hosiery and Underwear.

Guaranteed Quality! Low Prices! SUPERWEAR MEN'S HOSIERY AND UNDERWEAR ARE AMERICA'S GREATEST VALUES. Every garment is guaranteed. Low prices beat all local competition.

FREE! Complete selling outfit showing actual samples of merchandise furnished **FREE** including everything needed for READY CASH earnings.

Work During All or Spare Time! Give as much time to taking orders for SUPERWEAR as you can spare. One thing is certain—you will be especially well paid for your efforts. Agents everywhere make extraordinary incomes!

Act Now! No Obligation! Territory Open Near You!

SUPERWEAR, Inc., Dept. S-5, Minneapolis, Minn.

SELL PAINT

Be our agent in your locality. Take orders for Adams Paints and Liquid Roofing direct from factory, saving users 40%. You sell on credit, allow the freight and give a money-back guarantee. You can easily make up to $100 weekly in advance.

No Experience—No Investment

We show you how and post you on everything you need to know about paint. You do not have to invest a penny and we even furnish your selling outfit and necessary samples **Free.** No collecting either. You call on property and factory owners and purchasing agents and just write the order and pocket your profit. We do the rest. Send today for details and free Sample outfit.

Outfit Sent FREE

The Adams Paint Co., Dept. T-23, 1906 W. 80th St., Cleveland, Ohio.

MORE PAY *with* QUAKER FREE OUTFIT

FREE SHIRTS TIES CASH BONUS GIVEN

Earn big money right from the start. Let Quaker help you. Wonderful free Sample outfit gets orders everywhere. Men's Shirts, Ties, Underwear, Hosiery. Unmatchable values. Unique selling features. Ironclad guarantee. You can't fail with Quaker. Write for your Free outfit NOW.

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CORRECT Your NOSE!

Improve your appearance with the ANITA NOSE ADJUSTER. Shapes flesh and cartilage—quickly, safely and painlessly, while you sleep. Results are lasting. Doctors praise it. 68,000 users. Write for **30-Day TRIAL OFFER and FREE BOOKLET.**

ANITA INSTITUTE, 206 Anita Building, Newark, N. J.

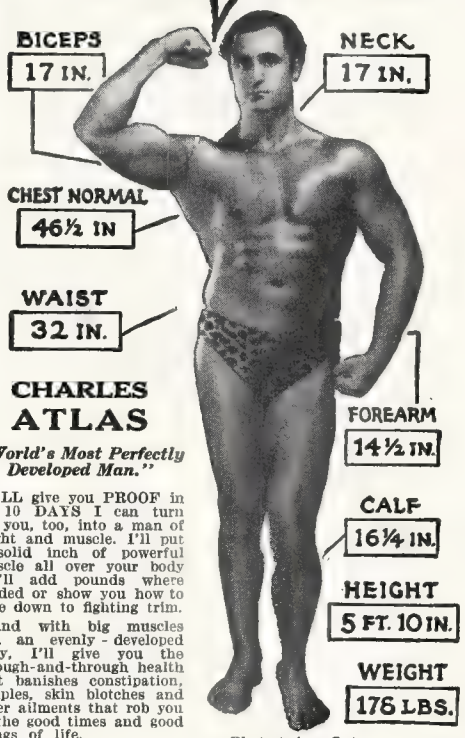
MYSTERY STORIES! at Bargain Prices

Send today for free circulars of Mystery Stories at bargain prices—many by world famous authors.

McKinlay, Stone & Mackenzie, Dept. 241

114 East 16th Street New York, N. Y.

"Give me your measure and I'll PROVE that you can have a body like mine"



CHARLES ATLAS

"World's Most Perfectly Developed Man."

Photo taken Oct. 15, 1929.

I'LL give you PROOF in 10 DAYS I can turn you, too, into a man of might and muscle. I'll put a solid inch of powerful muscle all over your body—I'll add pounds where needed or show you how to pare down to fighting trim.

And with big muscles and an evenly-developed body, I'll give you the through-and-through health that banishes constipation, pimples, skin blotches and other ailments that rob you of the good times and good things of life.

First, send for a free copy of my 48-page book—**"Everlasting Health and Strength."** With my book I'll send a chart for your measurements. Then compare **your** biceps with **mine.** Do the same with chest, legs, arms, neck, wrist and the rest of your body. Then get proof of what my secret of **Dynamic-Tension** will do for YOU—in your own home—spending 15 minutes a day doing what I tell you—without apparatus—without special foods, pills, or baths—without any fussy contrivances!

Remember, it's easy my way—**Dynamic-Tension** does the work. Find out what my secret will do for you—mail the coupon NOW for a free copy of my valuable book. CHARLES ATLAS (Dept. 122), 171 Madison Ave., New York City.

CHARLES ATLAS (Dept. 122)
171 Madison Avenue, New York City.

I want proof **Dynamic-Tension** will give me, too, a healthy, husky body and big muscle development. Send your free book and the confidential chart for my measurements.

Name.....

Address.....

City.....State.....

(Please print or write plainly.)

Win $3,500.00

Prizes from $1800.00 to $4245.00 each have been won through our unique advertising plan. In our last, an old man of 69, out of work, won over $5000.00. A boy, only 15, won $900.00. In next 3 or 4 months thousands of dollars will be awarded to fortunate persons who solve our puzzles and win our prizes.

FIND THE TWIN FLYERS

Watch out! These twelve pictures of a famous woman flyer all look alike—BUT—two, and only two, are exactly alike. **Find these twin flyers!** Some pictures are different in the collar, helmet, goggles, or tie. Remember, only two of the twelve are exactly alike. Find them, and send the numbers of the twin flyers on a post card or letter today. If correct, your answer will qualify you for this opportunity.

$7160.00 IN PRIZES GIVEN THIS TIME

Over 25 prizes, and duplicate prizes in case of ties. It's up to the winner whether he or she chooses $2875.00 in cash or a new Waco airplane, a big automobile, or a new home. A gorgeous prize list! ANYONE WHO ANSWERS THIS PUZZLE CORRECTLY MAY RECEIVE PRIZES OR CASH.

$625.00 ADDITIONAL FOR PROMPTNESS

Be prompt! It pays. Find the real twin flyers, and I will send Certificate which will be good for $625.00 if you are prompt and win first prize. Imagine, a first prize of $3500.00! NO MORE PUZZLES TO SOLVE. Any man, woman, boy, or girl in the U. S. A.---anyone at all, except residents of Chicago, Illinois, and former major prize winners. 25 of the people who take up this offer are going to win these wonderful prizes. Be one of them. Send the numbers of the twin flyers. Send no money, but be prompt.

J. D. SNYDER, Dept. 241, 54 W. Illinois St., Chicago, Ill.

Play the Hawaiian Guitar like the Hawaiians!

Only 4 Motions used in playing this fascinating instrument. Our native Hawaiian instructors teach you to master them quickly. Pictures show how. Everything explained clearly.

Play in Half Hour
After you get the four easy motions you play harmonious chords with very little practice. No previous musical knowledge needed.

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Even if you don't know one note from another, the 52 printed lessons and clear pictures make it easy to learn quickly. Pay as you play.

GIVEN *when you enroll* **—a sweet toned HAWAIIAN GUITAR, Carrying Case and Playing Outfit—Value $18 to $20**
No extras-everything included

WRITE AT ONCE for attractive offer and easy terms. You have everything to gain. A postcard will do. **ACT!**

OTHER COURSES Tenor Banjo, Violin, Tiple, Tenor Guitar, Ukulele, Banjo Ukulele. Under well known instructors.

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Approved as a Correspondence School Under the Laws of the State of New York – Member National Home Study Council

DEAFNESS IS MISERY

Multitudes of persons with defective hearing and Head Noises enjoy conversation, go to Theatre and Church because they Use Leonard Invisible Ear Drums which resemble Tiny Megaphones fitting in the Ear entirely out of sight. No wires, batteries or head piece. They are inexpensive. Write for booklet and sworn statement of the inventor who was himself deaf.

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SUBSTANTIAL ADVANCE ROYALTIES are paid on work found acceptable for publication. Anyone wishing to write *either the words or music* for songs may submit work for free examination and advice. *Past experience unnecessary.* New demand created by "Talking Pictures" fully described in our free book. Write for it Today. NEWCOMER ASSOCIATES
726 Earle Building, New York

Who Wants an Auto FREE?

STUDEBAKER—BUICK—NASH! Your choice!

OR $2000.00 CASH

Thousands of dollars in new autos and grand prizes will positively be given free to advertise and make new friends for my firm. Choice of Studebaker or Buick or Nash new 4-door sedan delivered free, or $2000.00 cash. Also Oldsmobile, Pontiac, Chevrolet, Fords, diamonds, other fine prizes and cash will be given free. No problems to do. No fine writing required. No words to make. No figures to add. Bank guarantees all prizes.

Pick Your Lucky Star!

All the stars in the circle are exactly alike except one. **That star is different to all the others** and it may be a lucky star for you. Can you pick it out? If you can, mark the different star and send the circle to me at once along with your name and address. A prompt answer can start you on the way to win the great $2000.00 free prize.

BE PROMPT—WIN $650.00 EXTRA

Someone like you who will write me at once can get $650.00 cash just for being prompt, so you may thank your lucky stars if you send your answer right off. No risk. Nothing to buy. Nothing hard to do. Over $7000.00 in valuable prizes will be given free of cost. Send today and I will show you just how you can get your free choice of these splendid new sedans or $2000.00 cash, without cost or obligation of any kind. All win plan! A reward for everybody! SEND NO MONEY. Answer AT ONCE.

Address GEO. WILSON, DEPT. 47, AUGUSTA, MAINE

RUPTURE IS NOT A TEAR

Your physician will tell you that hernia (rupture) is a muscular weakness in the abdominal wall.—Do not be satisfied with merely bracing these weakened muscles, with your condition probably growing worse every day!—Strike at the real cause of the trouble, and

WHEN—

The weakened muscles recover their strength and elasticity, and—
The unsightly, unnatural protrusion disappears, and—
You recover your vim, vigor and vitality,—your strength and energy,—and you look and feel better in every way,—and your friends notice the difference,—

THEN—

You'll know your rupture is gone, and
You'll know why for almost a quarter of a century numerous sworn statements report complete recovery and freedom from uncomfortable mechanical supports, without delay from work.

SEND NO MONEY

A Test of the scientific self-treatment mentioned in coupon below is now available to you, whether you are young or old,—man or woman. It costs you nothing to make this test.—For your own good mail the coupon NOW—TODAY.

FREE TEST COUPON
Plapao Laboratories, 815 Stuart Bldg., St. Louis, Mo.

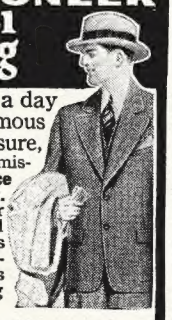
Send me a Free 10 day test supply of the remedial factor Plapao and 48-page illustrated book on Rupture; no charge for this now or later.

Name.....

Address.....

$4.50 to $7.00 (WITH BONUS) PROFIT Per SUIT

SELL PIONEER All Wool Tailoring
Full or Part Time



An opportunity to make $12 a day from the start, selling famous Pioneer tailored-to-measure, all-wool suits at $25. Commissions paid in advance. **Chance for own clothes at no cost.** Striking Big Outfit of over 100 large swatches furnished free—other equally remarkable values at $30 and $35. We train the inexperienced. Men willing to work for success will write for this big money-making opportunity, today.

Cash Paid Daily

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Your opportunity will never be bigger than your preparation. Prepare now and reap the rewards of early success. Free 64-Page Books Tell How. Write NOW for book you want, or mail coupon with your name, present position and address in margin today.

☐ Higher Accountancy	☐ Business Corres.
☐ Mod. Salesmanship	☐ Credit and Collection Correspondence
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☐ Banking and Finance	☐ Commercial Spanish
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LaSalle Extension University, Dept. 258-R, Chicago

FREE! Body Chart

If you will mail the coupon below, this Anatomical and Physiological Chart will be mailed to you without one cent of expense. It shows the location of the Organs, Bones of the Body, Muscles of the Body, Head and Vertebra Column and tells you how the nerves radiate from your spinal cord to all organs of the body. This chart should be in every home.

Where Is That PAIN?

It may be in the neck, back, hips, stomach, liver, legs or arms. Wherever it is, the chart will help to show you the location and cause of your ailment. For instance, this chart will help you locate vermiform appendix pains. Hundreds of lives might have been saved if people had known the location and character of the pain and had received proper attention.

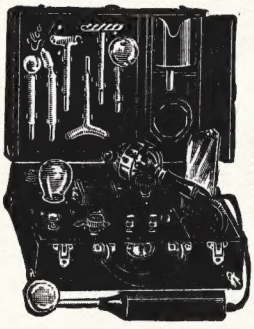
Stop that Pain

By Relieving the Cause with

Violet Ray — Vibration Ozone — Medical Electricity

The Four Greatest Curative Powers Generated by This

Great New Invention!



Elco Health Generators at last are ready for you! If you want more health—greater power to enjoy the pleasures and delights about you, or if more beauty is your desire—*write!* Ask for the book on these inventions which has just been prepared. It will be sent to you without cost. It tells you how Elco Health Generators aid you in leaving the lethargy and hopelessness of bad health and weakness behind forever. Re-vitalize yourself. Bring back energy. Be wholly alive. Write today!

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"Wouldn't take $1000 for my Elco." "Has done me more good in 2 weeks than doctors did in three years." "Cured my Rheumatism." "My Eczema gone." "Cured my stomach trouble." "Cured my weakness." "Now I sleep soundly all night." "Thanks to Elco my strength and vigor are back." "No more pain." "Colds never bother me now." "Chronic Constipation banished."

Elco Electric Health Generators

These great new inventions generate Violet Ray, Vibration, Electricity and Ozone—combined or separate. They operate on the electric light in your home or on their own motive power at less than 50 cents per year. Elco Health Generators are positively the only instruments which can give you in one outfit Electricity, Violet Ray—Vibration and Ozone—the four greatest curative agents. Send the coupon below. Get the Free Book NOW!

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Do not put this paper down without sending the coupon. Don't go on as you are with pains and with almost no life and energy. You owe it to yourself to be a better man or woman. You were put here to enjoy life—not just to drag through it. So do not rest another day until you have put your name on the coupon here. That will bring the whole story of these great new inventions. Do it today—now.

Lindstrom & Co. [*Makers of Therapeutic Apparatus since 1892.*]
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Please send me your free book, "Health—Power—Beauty" and full information of your 10-day Free Trial Offer.

Name.....

Address.....

In answering any advertisement on this page it is desirable that you mention this magazine.

"Four Raises in Two Years"

"AND it hasn't been hard to get them, either. Why, it seems only yesterday that I was wondering if I would ever make as much as $45 a week. And now I'm making $75.

"Tom Dawson was speaking about it today. 'Gee,' he said, 'I wish I had started studying with the I. C. S. when you did. Here I am plugging away at the same old job and the same old salary while you've gone 'way up. I bet you're making twice as much as I am. And to think that two years ago we were working side by side.'

"I told him it wasn't too late if he would only make the start and he said he was going to send in one of those I. C. S. coupons right away.

"I hope he does, because an I. C. S. course is the very thing he needs to get out of the rut. I wouldn't be making anywhere near $75 a week if I hadn't started to study just when I did."

Thousands of men now know the joy of happy, prosperous homes because they let the International Correspondence Schools prepare them in spare time for bigger work.

You will find them in city, town and country —in offices, factories, shops, stores, mines and mills — on farms and on railroads. There are clerks who became Advertising Managers, Salesmen and Executives — carpenters who became Architects and Contractors—mechanics who became Engineers and Electrical experts—men and boys who rose from nothing at all to splendid, responsible positions.

One hour after supper each night, spent with the I. C. S. in the quiet of your own home, will prepare you for the position you want in the work you like best.

This is all we ask: Without cost, without obligating yourself in any way, put it up to us to prove how we can help you. Just mark and mail this coupon for full particulars.

Mail Coupon for Free Booklet

INTERNATIONAL CORRESPONDENCE SCHOOLS
"The Universal University"
Box 2131-E, Scranton, Penna.

Without cost or obligation, please send me a copy of your booklet, **"Who Wins and Why,"** and full particulars about the subject *before* which I have marked X in the list below:

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☐ Electrical Engineering	☐ Architect
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☐ Railroad Positions	☐ Concrete Builder
☐ Gas Engine Operating	☐ Structural Engineer
☐ Civil Engineer ☐ Coal Mining	☐ Chemistry ☐ Pharmacy
☐ Surveying and Mapping	☐ Automobile Work
☐ Plumbing and Heating	☐ Aviation Engines
☐ Steam Engineering	☐ Agriculture ☐ Navigation
	☐ Mathematics ☐ Radio

BUSINESS TRAINING COURSES

☐ Business Management	☐ Salesmanship
☐ Industrial Management	☐ Advertising
☐ Personnel Management	☐ Business Correspondence
☐ Traffic Management	☐ Show Card and Sign Lettering
☐ Accounting and C. P. A. Coaching	☐ Stenography and Typing
	☐ English ☐ Civil Service
☐ Cost Accounting	☐ Railway Mail Clerk
☐ Bookkeeping	☐ Grade School Subjects
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Name.....

Street Address.....

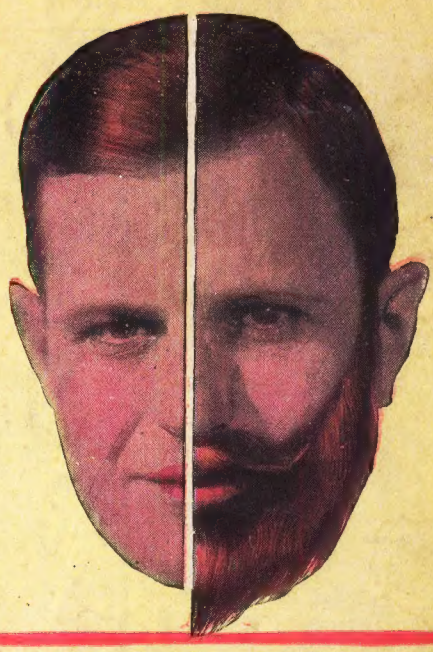
City.....State.....

Occupation.....

Persons residing in Canada should send this coupon to the International Correspondence Schools Canadian, Limited, Montreal, Canada

Missing Ad

No More Razor Blades To Buy!



365 KEEN SHAVES

A Year With One Single Blade

"I want to say that KRISS-KROSS Stropper is the best thing I ever saw. I have been using *one* blade continuously for one year and nine months and have no idea how much longer it will last."

C. S. Stephenson, Okla.

Inventor Discovers Amazing New Way to Shave! *–Without Buying Blades!*

KEEN, velvety shaves forever and no more blades to buy! That's what this astonishing invention offers the great army of American shavers today!

KRISS-KROSS is destined to revolutionize all existing traditions of shaving! Its performance is so sensational that it seems hardly fair to call it a stropper. Rather it is a *super*-stropper or blade-rejuvenator! No longer do you find that your blades "die" after five or six shaves. KRISS-KROSS "brings 'em to life" a surprising way! Actually—you can take a blade right out of a fresh package and improve it as much as 100% in eleven seconds with KRISS-KROSS.

MAGIC DIAGONAL STROKE

KRISS-KROSS employs the famous *diagonal stroke*, same as a master barber uses. Never before has anyone captured the secret of reproducing it automatically. Eight "lucky leather grooves" do the trick in 11 seconds with a precision it takes a master barber years to attain. Strops from *heavy to light*. Adjustable, automatic jig flies up and notifies you that your blade is ready—*ready with the keenest cutting-edge that steel can take!*

KRISS-KROSS produces unbelievable sharpness and prolongs the life of any razor blade for months and even years. Fits all brands and makes except Durham. Eliminates 83% of shaving costs and solves your blade problem for all time!

SENSATIONAL OFFER

And now for my surprising offer. To introduce KRISS KROSS to those who have not yet seen it, I am giving with it Free a new kind of razor. Possesses remarkable features. Instantly adjustable to any shaving position. A flip of the finger makes it (1) T-shape, (2) straight (old style), (3) or diagonal (new way). Gives a *sliding* instead of pulling stroke. Simply zips right through the toughest crop of whiskers and leaves your face satin-smooth and cool. Made of *rustless* metal. All one connected piece—nothing to assemble or screw up. Comes with 5 special-process blades and is entirely unlike anything you ever saw before!

Mail coupon now while this special offer is still good.

Make $66 IN ONE Day

Make big money with KRISS-KROSS. Giving away FREE razors boosts your profits amazingly. H. King made $66 in one day. N. C. Paige made $104 in 3 days! **Spare-time** workers, **Office** and **Factory** men make $6-$12 extra a day, showing KRISS-KROSS to friends and fellow employees. S. Kantala made $154 extra just working evenings 3 weeks. Get details at once. Check bottom of coupon and mail it tonight!

Rhodes' **KRISS KROSS**

RHODES KRISS-KROSS CORP., Dept. B4064, 1418 Pendleton Ave., ST. LOUIS, MO.

Canadian Address: CANADIAN KRISS-KROSS CO. 99 Wellington Street East, Toronto 2, Canada

STROPPER

Largest Manufacturers of Mechanical Strappers in the World.

KRISS KROSS CORP., Dept. B-4064
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Without obligation, please send me illustrated description and full details of your special introductory offer on KRISS KROSS super stropper and FREE 3-way razor.

Name.....

Address.....

City.....**State**.....

( ) Check here if interested in making money as authorized KRISS KROSS representative.